URBAN CHANGE AND CONTESTED SPACE IN CONTEMPORARY NAPLES

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Abstract

The research project studies the impact of urban regeneration in the historic centre of Naples during the 1990s. It examines how the centre-left administration, elected in 1993, harnessed the city's cultural and architectural heritage with the view to encouraging tourism, attracting inward investment and fostering among Neapolitans a sense of civic pride and a greater participation in urban life. It is argued that the reimaging of the built environment during the 1990s entailed re-definitions of citizenship, public space and urban history and the construction of a consensual vision about a 'new' Naples, but that this process was at the same time renegotiated and contested by residents and city users. The research focuses on three key urban sites – two piazzas and a park built after the 1980 earthquake – in order to analyse how the material and discursive consequences of regeneration led to conflicts over meanings and uses of public space. These case studies involved extensive periods of observation and interviews as well as consultation of newspapers and historical material. The study of Piazza Plebiscito, a former car park pedestrianized in 1994 and since officially adopted as the city's new symbol, examines disparate notions of heritage and urban decorum. Piazza Garibaldi, located in front of the main railway station and reconceived during the 1990s as the 'gateway' to the historic centre, analyses the relationship between immigrants and the piazza and the representation of such groups in debates about the regenerational city. Lastly, DAMM, an occupied *centro sociale* ('social centre') situated in an abandoned neighbourhood park, examines both the representation of the central popular quarters in debates about the city's renovation and the attempts by a group of local residents and young people to organize an alternative public space.

Contents

List of figures

Introduction and Part 1

Part 2: Piazza Plebiscito

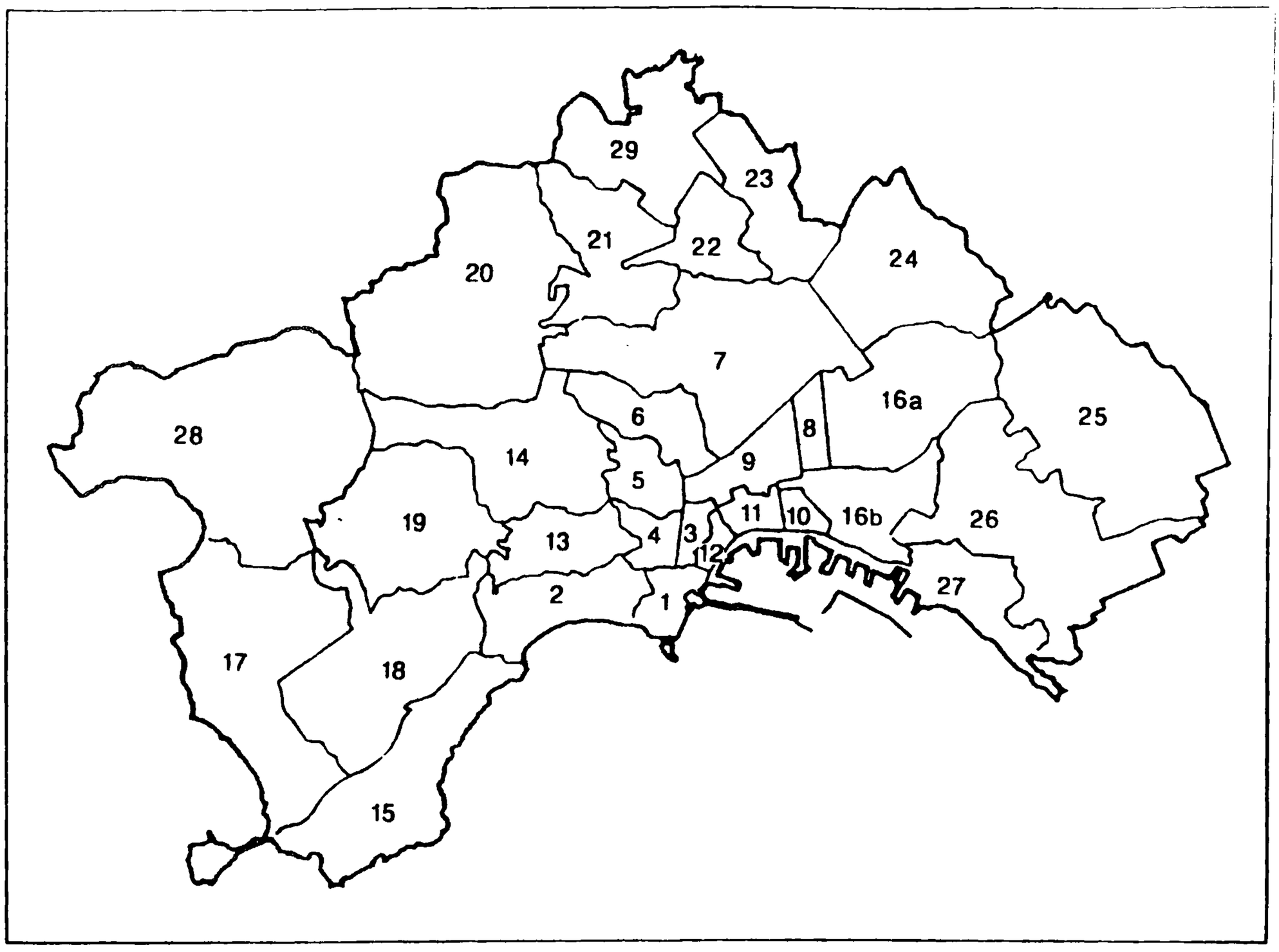
List of maps

Abbreviations

AN	Alleanza Nazionale
ASCOM	Associazione Commercianti
CGIL	Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro
CCD	Centro Cristiano Democratico
DAMM	Diego Armando Maradona Montesanto
DC	Democrazia Cristiana
DS	Democratici di Sinistra
FI	Forza Italia
FS	Ferrovie dello Stato
ISTAT	Istituto Centrale di Statistica
Lo Ska	Laboratorio Occupato di Sperimentazione e Kultura Antagonista
MSI-FN	Movimento Sociale Italiano-Fronte Nazionale
PCI	Partito Comunista Italiano
PDS	Partito Democratico della Sinistra
PPI	Partito Popolare Italiano
PRG	Piano Regolatore Generale
PSER	Programma Straordinario di Edilizia Residenziale
PSI	Partito Socialista Italiano
RAI	Radio Televisione Italiana
SDI	Socialdemocratici Italiani
TCI	Touring Club Italiano

1.i. The twenty regions of Italy

1.ii. Naples and its environs



Key

01 S. Ferdinando
02 Chiaia
03 S. Giuseppe
04 Montecalvario
05 Avvocata
06 Stella
07 S. Carlo all'Arena
08 Vicaria
09 San Lorenzo
10 Mercato
11 Pendino
12 Porto
13 Vomero
14 Arenella
15 Posillipo
16a Poggioreale
16b Zona Industriale
17 Bagnoli
18 Fuorigrotta
19 Soccavo
20 Chiaiano
21 Piscinola
22 Miano
23 Secondigliano
24 S. Pietro a Patierno
25 Ponticelli
26 Barra
27 S. Giovanni a Teduccio
28 Pianura
29 Scampia

1.iii. The districts of Naples

Introduction

Naples, Italy's third largest city and the principal metropolis of the South[1], offers a particularly fascinating case for examining contemporary urban change [**maps 1.i. and 1.ii.**]. It has long been regarded as pathologically 'unique': an underdeveloped city of chronic social and economic problems; characterized by peculiar cultural practices and ingenious survival strategies. During the 1980s and early 1990s, the city was considered by many to be the ultimate symbol of urban decay. Large parts of the old centre had been badly damaged by the 1980 earthquake. The flow of reconstruction funds into the city had led to extensive corruption in the public administration and collusion between politicians, entrepreneurs and organized crime. Unemployment had reached astronomical levels. The city lacked essential public services, from schools to clean tap water, and suffered from some of the most chaotic traffic and worst atmospheric pollution in Western Europe. However, during the course of the 1990s, conditions in the city appeared to significantly improve. Following systematic change in local politics and electoral reform in 1993, the city's administration, headed by the post-communist mayor Antonio Bassolino, embarked on a comprehensive programme of urban renewal. One of the administration's priorities was to revive and harness the city's cultural and architectural heritage. Historical monuments were restored, piazzas and streets were repaved and closed to traffic, and a plethora of open-air events were organized to draw people back to the city's once neglected public spaces. This strategy aimed to overturn the negative reputation of Naples and, by attracting tourism and inward investment, lay the foundations for its economic development. In the space of a few years, a city which had been commonly (and obsessively) portrayed in a state of interminable decline, had come to nationally represent a laboratory of "urban regeneration".

I commenced this study at a moment when the theme of urban change in Naples was a focus of public attention. During a year of pre-doctoral research in the city between 1996 and 1997, I became interested in how the material and symbolic transformations of the city were being represented by local politicians and the media. I regularly attended public conferences and meetings across the city where the idea of a 'new' Naples was the subject of passionate debate. There was a general consensus of opinion during this period that the administration had successfully steered the city out of crisis

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[1] In 1991, Naples had 1,067,000 inhabitants and its province had a population of over 3 million people (ISTAT 1995).

and had led to a renewed sense of civic pride among Neapolitans. However, at the same time, there appeared to be a discrepancy between these debates and what was occurring in the city's streets. A day would not pass without some part of Naples being brought to a standstill by groups of people protesting for jobs or housing. Restored spaces and monuments in the city centre, which had been inserted into new tourist trails, seemed to serve more prosaic purposes. Church doors were converted by teams of children into goal posts while the bollards protecting the new pedestrianized zones became slalom posts for the swarms of *motorini* (mopeds). Many people I met insisted that Naples had fundamentally changed, but I had never come across such conspicuous contradictions in a city. I therefore began to reflect on what the discourse of urban renewal might mean in practical situations, how the transformations to the built environment were experienced by different people and why these often became a source of conflict.

The research project had originallly set out to explore the transformations of the contemporary Italian city through forms of alternative youth culture. In other words, the initial frame of reference was not the specific context of Naples during the 1990s. In particular, I intended to study the *centri sociali* ('social centres'), a national network of self-managed political and cultural centres located in occupied buildings, and to examine how activists reappropriated urban spaces to construct alternative ideas about the city. However, during the period of preliminary study in Naples, it was firstly decided that a focus on youth was too restrictive in the way it prioritized the category of age over other factors such as class, gender and race. Instead, I turned my attention to a wider range of actors, from the residents of popular neighbourhoods to immigrants, and began to consider different everyday uses and meanings of space which were not explicitly or consciously political. Secondly, the research broadened from a specific focus on the *centri sociali* to investigate other urban spaces which had transformed or were the subject of political and public debates during the 1990s.

The original intention had also been to compare Naples with the markedly different urban situation of Milan. The idea of a systematic analysis of equivalent urban spaces was, however, eventually abandoned due to the unfeasibility of studying in-depth two cities. There were also pragmatic reasons for concentrating on Naples. After the period of preliminary research, I returned to the city in 1998 to carry out fieldwork. During the following two years, I built up close contacts in the *Istituto Universitario Orientale* and

in the Sociology department at the University of Naples and regularly discussed my work with researchers who were studying the city's political and urban transformations. On separate occasions, I presented my research in seminars which were particularly important for the critical feedback I received from professors and students. I continued to be an avid attendee of public debates and meetings in various locations, from the *Istituto Italiano di Studi Filosofici* to district councils, where I was able to meet local politicians and public figures. I also attained practical experience of some of the city's problems through participation in a number of political and voluntary organizations which included an immigrant legal advice centre. During this same period I was immersed, albeit as a foreigner, into the city's intense urban life which involved, *inter alia*, building personal rapports with local residents, daily dealings with 'illegal' car-park attendants, adapting pedestrian habits (which, in the absense of pavements, meant walking between traffic) and, likewise, experiencing the frustrations of riding a scooter in the most people-ridden streets of Europe. Nevertheless, the original comparative framework with Milan was important for highlighting the North-South dimension in Italy and the various typologies of European cities. It heightened sensitivity towards the particularities of Naples and led to a continual interrogation of urban models and prescriptive labels, but it also underlined the risk of treating the city as a unique paradigm external to international processes of urban change.

The search for suitable sites of study led me to concentrate on the city's '*centro storico*' (historic centre). This part of the city was very much the focal point of urban policies and promotional narratives about Naples during the 1990s. It consequently provided an ideal setting for examining the problems and tensions surrounding the administration's attempts to reimage the city. I decided to adopt a micro-analysis of three public places in order to explore the link between official debates about urban renewal and people's everyday experiences and negotiations of urban space (for location of sites see **map 1.v.**). Piazza Plebiscito, the city's largest historical piazza and until the early 1990s a car park, was an immediate focus of attention. Following its pedestrianization in 1994, the piazza was officially promoted as the symbol of a 'new' Naples and was frequently used as a venue for large public events. At the same time, it offered a fascinating insight into the conflicts surrounding the creation of a 'heritage space'. The piazza's newly acquired status enhanced its role as an arena of political protest and its closure to traffic led to unintended consequences (becoming, for instance, the *centro storico's* most popular

football pitch). Piazza Garibaldi, the second selected site, is the first place that many visitors (myself included) see when arriving in Naples. Situated in front of the main railway station, the piazza is also the economic space and meeting-point for a significant section of Naples's immigrant population. The piazza was specifically chosen to explore the different relationships between these groups and urban space and to examine how and why their presence became a source of public conflict during the 1990s. The third site, 'DAMM', is a *centro sociale* located in an abandoned park in the central neighbourhood of Montesanto. In contrast to the other *centri sociali* in the city, DAMM's occupation sought to involve local residents in creating a multi-purpose public place. The site was also chosen to examine political and media representations of the *centro storico's* popular quarters and how these were contested by DAMM through its reuse and redefinition of urban space.

The history and memory of each site was explored in order to examine how place narratives emerged and transformed during the 1990s. A central theme of the research was to investigate the concept of public space and its pivotal role in urban politics over the period. The reclamation of streets, piazzas and parks from traffic and general disorder was conceived as a means of removing the signs of past neglect and creating a collective sense of belonging among the city's inhabitants. Each site was examined both as a physical location and as a sphere of public debate. Therefore, on the one hand I looked at material transformations in terms of new functions and controls, and on the other examined the ways in which each site was discursively constructed and how this involved the exclusion of certain groups from the public arena. This led me to engage with concepts which intersected with the idea of public space. In particular, I analysed how the discourse of citizenship was deployed by Bassolino and local politicians to formulate new ideas about public participation and civic identity and how this same category framed debates about improvements to the built environment.

There are no detailed studies of the social and cultural impact of urban transformations in Naples during the 1990s. Most available material deals with political change and urban planning, while there exists a small number of general accounts about the changing shape of the city (for instance Lepore and Ceci 1997). In order to carry out the case studies different methods were employed and a variety of sources were used or 'created'. These included political accounts and biographies, council documents and

urban plans, photographic images and secondary material such as historical and anthropological studies. Extensive use was made of the post-war press collections in the city's two newspaper libraries. Newspapers were used not simply to sift information about daily events or to collect the soundbites of politicians, but to study media representations of the spaces before and after the election of Bassolino and to examine the consensual framework of public debates about the city during the 1990s. I specifically chose to concentrate on the city's mainstream press – *il Mattino*[2], the local edition of *la Repubblica* and *Corriere del Mezzogiorno* – not only for practical reasons (media analysis is exceedingly time-consuming) but because these newspapers were most concerned with charting the transformation of the *centro storico*. They played an instrumental role in building and transmitting consensual ideas about the city and, although generally supportive of the Bassolino administration, were the main forums for often heated urban debates[3].

Fieldwork consisted in systematic and extensive periods of observation, participation in activities (from events organized by the council in Piazza Plebiscito to debates and meetings in DAMM), as well as tape-recorded interviews with a wide range of informants. This "ethnographically sensitive" approach (Marzano 1996) aimed to examine diverse relationships between people and space and to 'open up' voices and other viewpoints which were censured or unacknowledged in official debates. The intention was not to provide a more definitive account of each space or to 'get into the minds' of actors interviewed and observed, but to relate the multiple meanings and uses with dominant definitions of space. In other words, the fieldwork was considered integral to the rest of the analysis rather than an independent component. The specific approach adopted for each site is explained in the relevant chapters, while further details regarding methodology and research material are located in the appendix.

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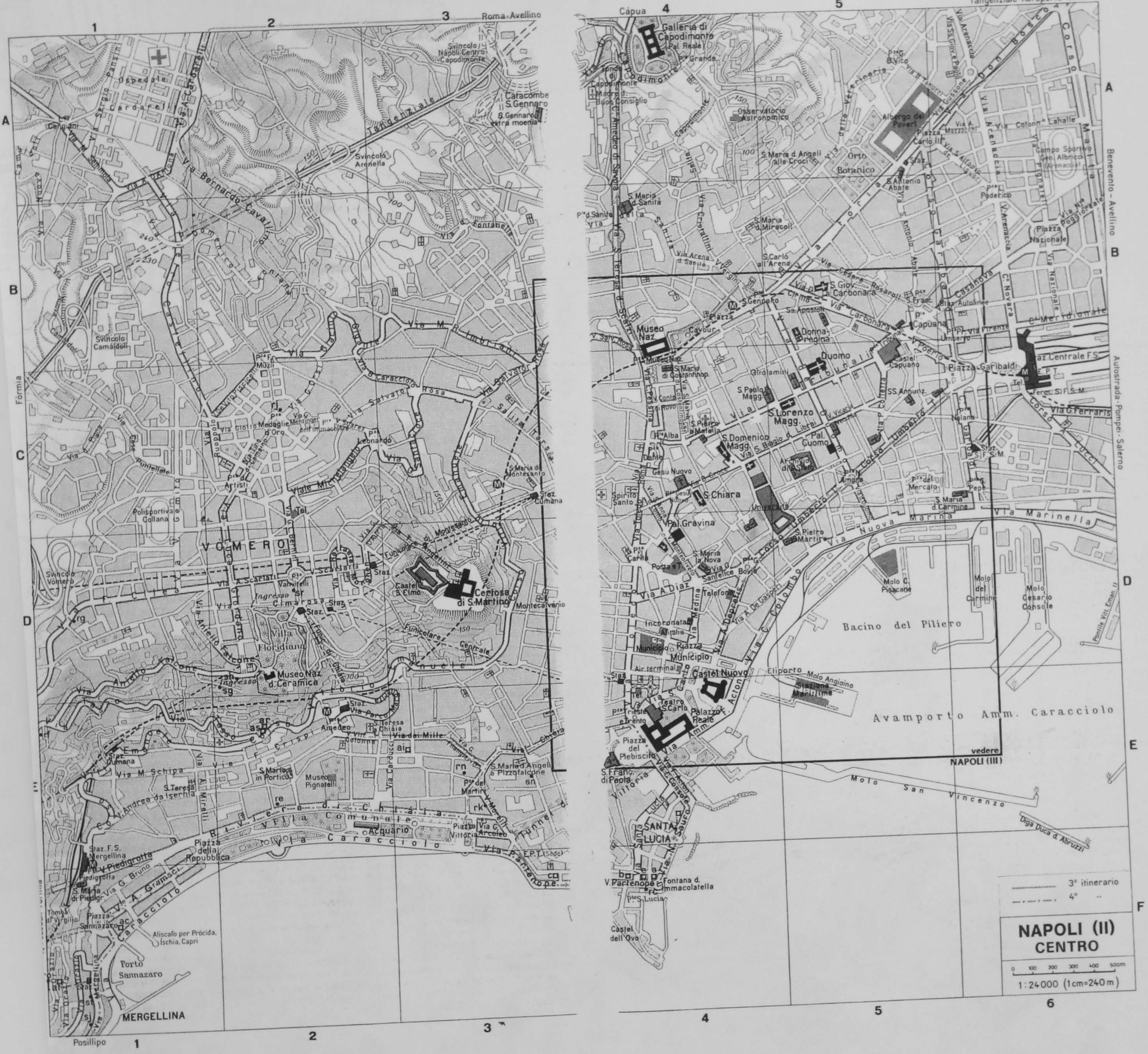
[2] *Il Mattino*, founded in 1892, is the city's principal local newspaper which in 1992 had a regional circulation of 166,000 (Lumley 1996: 2).

[3] A focus on the right wing press (such as *il Giornale di Napoli*) and minor publications (such as *La Verità*) would have offered a different slant. The former usually snubbed or ignored the administration's initiatives in the *centro storico* while the latter were more concerned with news about crime and local celebrities rather than urban-related issues. As such, they proved less useful for examining how regeneration was represented. Neverthless, other newspapers (including national publications such as *Corriere della Sera* and *il Manifesto*) were looked at in the case of particularly controversial matters or when events received national coverage. A full list of newspapers and the months and years consulted is located in the appendix.

The thesis is structured in four parts. The first part provides an introduction to the principal arguments and investigates key concepts and perspectives of the research: the history of urban renewal in the *centro storico* of Naples; contemporary models of regeneration; the concept of citizenship in relationship to political discourses about the city; theories about public space and spatial conflict. The second part analyses the transformation of Piazza Plebiscito from a car park to a pedestrianized zone and new urban symbol. It explores official debates over cultural heritage and urban decorum which have surrounded the piazza's facelift and how these relate to everyday experiences of the space. The third part focuses on the reconception of Piazza Garibaldi as the 'gateway' to the *centro storico* and examines the relationship between different groups of immigrants and the piazza and the representation of such groups in debates about the city during the 1990s. The fourth part analyses political and media representations of the popular quarters in the *centro storico* and proceeds to investigate the attempts by DAMM activists to organize an alternative public space in the neighbourhood of Montesanto. An extensive use of maps of the city and large-scale plans of the three sites serve to orientate the reader who is not familiar with Naples and are employed in certain cases to present research findings. Illustrations are similarly used as visual aids and are also examined as source material. The thesis is divided into case studies but is neverthless conceived as an ensemble. The parts refer to one another and create a series of different viewpoints on key problems such as the re-presentation of urban space in Naples and the experience of regeneration at an everyday level.



1.iv. Central Naples


Corso Arnaldo Lucci
Via Vespucci
Via della Marinella
Via Amerigo
Calata della Marinella
Darsena Armando Diaz
Ponte Vittorio Em.
Molo Cesario Console
Darsena
Bacini
Avamporto Ammiraglio F. Caracciolo
CAGLIARI
CATANIA
FOLIE
Novara
Padova
Genova
Palermo
Bologna
Firenze
Venezia
Milano
Corso Meridionale
STAZIONE FS NAPOLI CENTRALE
FERMATA S.F.S.M.
Via Cosenz
Via Cosmo Fuga
Via Ferrante Palasciano
OSPEDALE LORETO MARE
Via Loreto
Via Ferrante Palasciano
Via Agostino Depretis
Via Medina
Via Vittorio Emanuele
Via Ferdinando Acton
Via Francesco Caracciolo
Via Partenope
Via Nazario Sauro
Via Cesario Console
Via Parco del Castello
Via Ammiraglio Acton
Via Generale Orsini
Via Cristoforo Colombo
Via Nuova Marina
Via Nuova Darsena
Via Nuova Caracciolo
Via Nuova Cesario Console
Via Nuova Ponte Vittorio Em.
Via Nuova Agostino Depretis
Via Nuova Medina
Via Nuova Vittorio Emanuele
Via Nuova Ferdinando Acton
Via Nuova Francesco Caracciolo
Via Nuova Amerigo Vespucci
Via Nuova Marinella
Via Nuova Cristoforo Colombo

1.1. Image of *centro storico* from Vomero

PART 1: URBAN CHANGE IN A PARTICULAR CITY. NAPLES IN THE 1990S

Chapter 1: The *Centro Storico*, Urban Regeneration and Political Renewal

1.1 The *centro storico*

The idea of '*centro storico*', closely entwined with the historical development of Italian cities, is essentially a twentieth-century creation (Cervellati 1991: 41). This area previously coincided with the city itself; a distinct entity separated from the countryside by defensive walls and custom posts. In popular and political urban discourse in Italy the *centro storico* today represents the symbolic and civic heart of the city. This is typically contrasted with a modern, anonymous, unregulated 'periphery'. Even though cities have dispersed, engulfing other settlements and crossing administrative boundaries, and therefore making it difficult to talk about *a* centre (or, for that matter, *a* periphery (Foot 2000)), the *centro storico* has, in most cases, remained the hub of cultural, social, economic and political activities, and the focus of urban representations.

Naples possesses one of the oldest and largest *centri storici* in Europe [**fig. 1.1 and maps 1.iv. and 1.v.**]. Around 1500, the city already had a population of over 200,000 people. As capital of an independent kingdom, it enjoyed numerous fiscal privileges and became a pole of inward migration from the impoverished and oppressed countryside. By the first half of the sixteenth century the city's population had risen to 300,000 and it thereafter remained one of Europe's largest cities until the mid-nineteenth century. The city's economy was unable to absorb the massive influx of people who swelled the ranks of an urban poor (variably denominated the '*plebe*' or '*lazzari*') which survived by its wits and through a subsistence 'slum economy' (Allum 1974; Galasso 1978). Moreover, the city did not sufficiently expand to accomodate the growing population. Rather, every available space – including stables and even caves in the tuff escarpments – was converted into a dwelling, while further floors were added to the medieval 'skyscrapers' vividly described by Boccaccio in the Decameron. Many buildings subsequently rose to six or seven storeys high. This vertical expansion led to a peculiar pattern of 'residential stratification' whereby different social classes lived on top of each other: the populace in the ground level '*bassi*', the aristocracy on the '*piano nobile*' (usually the first floor) and the commercial and merchant classes on the upper floors.

The *centro storico* of Naples today remains largely intact and, despite a fall in population after the Second World War, is still one of the most densely populated urban areas in Europe[1]. It comprises a rectangular ancient core (the '*centro antico*') which conserves the street plan of the Graeco-Roman settlement and where a large part of the city's architectural and artistic monuments are situated. Surrounding the *centro antico* and climbing up the surrounding hills are a number of '*quartieri popolari*' (popular quarters) which developed between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. Perhaps the most (in)famous of these neighbourhoods are the 'Spanish Quarters', an incredibly tight grid of blocks and alleyways which rise to the west of the city's principal commercial street Via Toledo (popularly known by its former name Via Roma). Originally designed during the reign of the Viceroys as a garrison for the Spanish troops (hence the name), the area came to be associated from the nineteenth century onwards with the urban poor, organized crime and prostitution, and to this day is still considered the quintessence of 'low' or 'popular' Naples. Contrary to a tendency which conceives the various *quartieri popolari* and *centro antico* as a uniform entity, there are notable social and urban differences between areas and different relationships with the rest of the city. Between the south-west corner of the *centro antico* and the sea lies the second monumental district of the *centro storico*. This area is characterized by a series of wide streets and large piazzas and comprises the city's major public and adminstrative buildings. These include the former Royal Palace, now a museum and national library, the Maschio Angioino castle, housing a museum and the seat of the city council, Palazzo San Giacomo, the city hall, Teatro San Carlo, the city's opera house, and the Galleria Umberto I, a late nineteeth-century shopping arcade. A few hundred metres along the coast is the Castel dell'Ovo, perched on a rock linked to the mainland by a short causeway, which is used for temporary exhibitions and, like the Palazzo Reale, as a venue for international conferences and political summits. Stretching west from the Castel dell'Ovo are the relatively airy and more salubrious middle and upper-class quarters of Chiaia (which includes the city centre's only principal park, Villa Comunale), Mergellina and Posillipo. Apart from a number of ancient Roman villas in Posillipo and a small settlement at Piedigrotta, these three areas did not develop until the eighteenth century. They are physically cut off from the rest of the *centro storico* by

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[1] In 1991 the *centro storico* had a density of 17,509 inhabitants per km², which rose to over 30,000 inhabitants per km² in the districts of San Lorenzo (37,227), Montecalvario (32,155) and Avvocata (30,290). The average density for Naples, 9,102 inhabitants per km², was the highest among Italy's main cities, and was followed by Milan (7,541), Turin (7,394) and Palermo (4,397) (Comune di Napoli 1996c).

the Monte Echia promontory and Vomero hill and are often considered distinct from the older core of the city.

During the last 150 years the *centro storico* has been the subject of conflicting discourses of conservation and restructuring and has passed through alternating periods of neglect and attention[2]. The incorporation of the South into the Italian state in 1861 had immense repercussions on a city whose principal economic base had been linked to its status as capital of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies (Macry 1997). The city's overcrowded and filthy slums became a thorn in the side of the new State and contradicted the Risorgimento's promises of progress. Following the city's downgrading in status to regional centre, the terms 'renewal' and 'recovery' became permanent issues of urban change. In particular, two somatic terms came to be associated with attempts at modernizing the city's ancient 'body': '*risanamento*' (meaning 'building improvements' but originating from the verb '*risanare*' meaning to 'cure' or to 'heal') and '*sventramento*' (implying 'clearance' but literally 'disembowelment'). The '*Risanamento*' also specifically refers to the spate of building which followed the cholera epidemic of 1884. Special legislation was passed to fund slum clearances in the Mercato and Pendino districts near the port. Frank Snowden argues that the epidemic was the first for which the Liberal regime could be held morally responsible and the government's intervention "carried the powerful subliminal message that Liberal Italy was at last fully committed to answering the grievances of the Mezzogiorno" (1995: 363). The wide boulevards lined with sobre buildings served to replace the uncomfortable images of poverty and urban backwardness with a vision of order and modernity. This Haussmann-inspired 'urban cleansing' programme did little to alleviate the city's most pressing problems, namely the dire poverty and hazardous sanitary conditions. In her impassioned attack on the *Risanamento's* failings, Matilde Serao famously described the principal new thoroughfare, Corso Umberto I, '*un paravento*' (windshield) because, she claimed, it had merely shielded the middle classes

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[2] The centre had already entered into a period of gradual dereliction after curbs on building were lifted in 1717 and the city expanded (Cunzo 1994: 64). The Bourbons' reign in the city from 1734 to 1860 has been traditionally held responsible for the city's 'backwardness' (De Seta 1999), during which time lavish royal and courtly residences were erected amidst squalor, and the populace were gulled by the 'three f's': '*forca, farina e festa*' (gallows, flour and festivals). More recently, the Bourbons' contribution to the city's growth and artistic heritage has been re-examined in a more positive light; underlining the infrastructural projects, public building such as the massive Albergo dei Poveri and industrial development in, for instance, ceramics and iron woorks. The recent series of exhibitions in Naples and across the south of Italy dedicated to the Bourbon dynasty "Viaggio nella Memoria 1734-1861" included

and visitors from ungainly sights (Serao 1994). Under the Fascist regime. the Monteoliveto market area and the Rione Carità, located between the *centro antico* and the Spanish Quarters, were demolished to make way for a new administrative centre consisting of public offices, a central post office and government buildings. As with the *Risanamento*, the Fascist *sventramento* – the disembowelling of popular Naples – was justified as a modernizing, sanitary measure but the underlying pretext was to reinforce both the regime's physical presence and raise the city's national status.

Following the Second World War, the city experienced massive and unplanned expansion. Thousands of middle-class residents moved out to the new, more comfortable suburbs which were mushrooming around the old city. These were later followed by a sizeable number of poorer inhabitants who were moved out to the public housing estates that were built from the late fifties onwards such as the Rione Traiano in the western district of Soccavo. The population of the *centro storico* subsequently fell from 652,000 in 1951 to 519,000 in 1971[3], while the city's total population over the same period rose from 1,010,000 to 1,227,000 (Comune di Napoli 1999b). The urban landscape was totally transformed. The surrounding hills that had been farmed for centuries were suddenly covered in a 'Chinese wall' of high-rise blocks of flats. The unplanned new building under the Lauro and Christian Democrat administrations of the 1950s and 1960s was officially sanctioned as a social and economic palliative and often involved collusion between local politicians and speculators, famously denounced in Francesco Rosi's film "Le Mani sulla Città" of 1963[4]. Serao's *Ventre di Napoli* was now overshadowed by the '*città abusiva e senza regole*': the unplanned, illegal city.

The rapid and unregulated expansion of the city led to a de facto demarcation of the old centre. In comparison to the city's outskirts there was little new building in the centre.

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a comprehensive survey of the urban and architectural plans and projects of the period. Neverthless it remains the case that much of the old centre entered a period of interminable decline.

[3] Here the *centro storico* refers to the Chiaia-San Ferdinando-Posillipo, Vicaria-San Lorenzo, Pendino-Mercato, Avvocata-Montecalvario-San Giuseppe-Porto and Stella-San Carlo all'Arena districts.

[4] The 1939 master plan (PRG), which had proposed a sectorial expansion of the city with industrial districts and suburban parks, was completely overturned; indeed the colour coded areas on the plan were changed to allow unrestricted building. In 'Le Mani sulla Città' the headquarters of the chief planner were symbolically located in the city's tallest building, the thirty-storey Società Cattolica Assicurazioni skyscraper erected during the expansion of the Rione Carità in the mid 1950s. Its construction was made possible by a 1935 decree which granted the mayor (in this case Lauro) the faculty of choosing the height of buildings considered of monumental character. The building epitomises the authorities' anti-planning attitudes and disregard of urban landscape during the postwar period (Belfiore and Gravagnuolo 1994: 241).

Some new edifices were erected on sites damaged by bombs during the Second World War, but, with the notable exception of the redevelopment of Via Marina by the port and the extension of the Rione Carità by the Lauro administration during the 1950s, these barely altered the overall morphology of the *centro storico*. While the massive expansion of the periphery ultimately spared it from the bulldozers, the inability of implementing modernization plans and the shift away from urban improvement programmes meant that large tracts of the *centro storico* were left in a state of decay. It was afflicted by a series of crises which reinforced the outward image of a backward, 'Third World' city. Rotting buildings collapsed, often with tragic consequences, and by the late 1970s between 250 and 300 families were being made homeless every year (Belli 1986: 79). An outbreak of cholera in 1973 which affected above all the *quartieri popolari* suggested that sanitary conditions had improved little since the time of the *Risanamento*. The whole city lacked basic services: the Galasso Commission of 1973 for instance concluded that 4000 extra classrooms were needed to solve the problem of 'rotational school sharing' (Cederna 1991). Nevertheless, the *centro storico* remained the fulcrum of commercial, tertiary and administrative activities and was thus burdened with increasing levels of traffic. Debates about urban renewal focused on the need to modernize the centre's transport system and relocate activities to a new Centro Direzionale (administrative district) which after over two decades of discussions was eventually commenced in 1985 to the immediate north of the railway tracks of the central station[5].

On 23rd November 1980 a violent earthquake struck Campania and parts of Basilicata, causing over 3,600 deaths and destroying whole villages. While the death toll in Naples was far lower than in the mountain regions, the earthquake had a devestating effect on the urban fabric of the city and the fragile informal economy upon which thousands of people depended[6]. Almost 8,000 buildings were declared unsafe for habitation and the 80,000 people made homeless were temporarily housed in 2,500 prefabricated 'containers' (although some of these still exist), in hotels around the city and region, in makeshift caravan parks and on ferries in the port. The old city, already physically and

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[5] This high-rise development has had very little impact on the city's traffic problems and on social conditions in the surrounding neighbourhoods, and a limited effect on the city's economy. The Centro Direzionale remains "a foreign body in the urban fabric of the city" (Cavola and Vicari 2000: 533).

[6] The total death toll (including a handful provoked by a second tremor on 14th February 1981) was 81. Most of these were killed after a jerry-built council block collapsed in the eastern suburb of Poggioreale, while a further 10 people died of heart attacks.

socially vulnerable, bore the brunt of the disaster: 57% of inhabitants from the Mercato-Pendino district and 30% from the San Lorenzo-Vicaria and Montecalvario districts were made homeless. The tremor's impact led to an upsurge in social unrest: schools and other public buildings were occupied, the organized unemployed groups, swelled with new recruits, intensified their fight for regular employment, while social movements and terrorist organizations mobilized against the 'deportations' of poor residents from the *centro storico*. Despite the upsurge in social protest and the forced diaspora of the '*quartierini*' to the outskirts of Naples and provincial towns, there was no major plan to restore or rebuild the *centro storico*. Although the 219 law, passed by central government in May 1981 to fund the reconstruction of Campania and Basilicata, earmarked money for property owners to carry out repairs on seriously and lightly damaged buildings (Belli 1986: 119-123), the majority of the PSER (*Programma Straordinario di Edilizia Residenziale*) projects for the city of Naples were located in the eastern and northern working-class suburbs and satellite towns, where 20,000 new appartments, leisure facilities and schools were planned. Repairs to damaged housing stock and minor monuments were held up by bureaucracy and to this day many buildings in the centre remain supported by scaffolding. In the decade after the earthquake, the population of the old city dropped from 462,000 in 1981 to 372,000 in 1991, although after reaching an all time peak in 1971, the overall population of Naples also fell drastically from 1,212,000 in 1981 to 1,067,000 in 1991 (Comune di Napoli 1999b). While the early achievements of the PSER projects in the suburbs were considered an isolated success (De Lucia 1998), the reconstruction period came to be associated more with the unfinished white elephants, the vast sums of money which flowed into the hands of corrupt politicians and criminal organizations and the general detrioration of Naples's image (Barbagallo 1997b).

Amidst a climate of general neglect, there had nevertheless long been a concern for the *centro storico's* historic patrimony; both in terms of its relation to notions of 'Neapolitan-ness' and its importance for the tourist industry. This was very much an elite tradition in which a select number of monuments were singled out as mnemonics of a distant, more noble past in contradistinction to the mass of vernacular buildings considered of no architectural value. For instance, the restoration of the Maschio Angioino castle during the 1920s involved the destruction of the eighteenth century houses and workshops that had been built around its base. The approach to the city's

heritage changed little during the post-war period. Many of the minor monuments which survived restructuring (such as small churches) were either permanently closed in a state of disrepair or, more often, were converted to meet more immediate needs (housing, workshops or carparks). Attention focused on a few symbolic restoration programmes, in particular the Santa Chiara monastery which had been badly damaged during the war. The idea of conserving whole areas rather than single monuments did not arise until the 1970s and this initially focused on the *centro antico* (Fratta 1985). The *centro storico* was officially delineated for the first time in the 1972 master plan (*piano regolatore generale*, from now on PRG) with the supposed purpose of safeguarding the city's architectural heritage from the threat of demolition. The protected zone eventually encompassed a total area of 750 hectares which corresponded to the pre-twentieth century part of the city. However, the risk of major restructuring remained, especially in the *quartieri popolari*, because the general restrictions could still be overturned by proposing individual modifications known as '*varianti*' (Cederna 1991).

During the 1980s the *centri storici* of cities across Italy, which had been 'reclaimed' by social movements and the cultural programmes organized by local governments during the previous decade, became increasingly desirable places to live and work. In 1985 30% of investment in building was in restoration work and by 1989 this had risen to 50%, although this was markedly higher in the north of the country[7]. After the earthquake, concern about the fate of Naples's *centro storico* grew. A small number of publicly visible cultural associations, heritage groups, intellectuals and historians campaigned for the integrated protection and restoration of the whole centre (although the focus was initially on salvaging derelict monuments rather than the crumbling housing stock). The emphasis on revaluing the city's heritage was in sharp contrast to the economic interests of private businesses and local authorities for whom the modernization of the old city promised huge profits. Symptomatic of the opposing interests was the clash over the *Regno del Possibile* project at the end of the decade which proposed wholesale demolition and new building in the *quartieri popolari*. The protests organized by intellectuals and associations were partly instrumental in defeating the project[8]. Despite such proposals, there were no major interventions in the centre. Under the Christian Democrat-Socialist controlled administrations between 1983

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[7] These figures refer to national averages. The figures were far higher in the North (55% in 1985) than in the South (13%) (*La Repubblica* 10/2/89).
[8] This episode will be examined in greater depth in chapter 10.

and 1993, any project was dependent on vast sums of public investment which were instead channelled into the reconstruction programmes in the suburbs and the building of the new Centro Direzionale. Isolated but highly publicized restorations of buildings and pedestrianizations of public spaces at the beginning of the 1990s were conducted for the most part by the 'new' associations. The *Monumenti Porte Aperte* (Monuments Open Doors) and *La Scuola Adotta un Monumento* (The Schools Adopt a Monument) campaigns annually organized by the Napoli 99 Foundation from 1992, which opened up 'forgotten' historic buildings to the public, were a symbolic moment for the amount of people they managed to mobilize (Barracco 1999). During the same period, a campaign was organized by heritage groups to obtain UNESCO recognition of the city centre as a 'patrimony of humanity' which was eventually accorded in 1995. The growing consensus around the revaluing and conservation of the *centro storico* was captured by the left administration elected in December 1993. As well as considering it a fundamental resource for the city's economic and cultural revival, the *centro storico* would become the focal point of narratives about a 'new' Naples.

1.2 Regenerational models and the case of Naples

There is a wealth of recent literature which attempts to comprehend the transformations of the contemporary Western city. It is argued that a new kind of city has emerged over the last twenty-five years which has been forced to adapt to the effects of de-industrialization and a transformed political economy (Harvey 1989b). Cities have been faced with the difficult task of transforming their economic base through the development of tertiary, high technology, tourist, cultural and leisure industries. At the same time they have had to increasingly compete amongst themselves to attract inward footloose investment, skilled work forces and visitors. The term 'regeneration' is generally used to refer to this process of urban renewal. At an immediate level it is used to refer to a host of transformations such as the redevelopment of former industrial sites, the infrastructural switch to the service sector and the reimaging of city centres. However, regeneration does not simply describe physical changes to the built environment but is very much a composite concept, encompassing economic, environmental, social, cultural, symbolic and political dimensions (Bianchini and Landry 1993: 211). Here I intend to pin down the central themes before considering their relevance to the case of Naples.

Firstly, regeneration is connected to a transition in the running of cities. Observers have proclaimed the emergence of a 'new urban politics' whereby city governments are being steered away from the traditional activities associated with the local state (Hall and Hubbard 1998). The traditional role of urban administrations as distributors of services and welfare has been seriously undermined by drastic cuts in public investment. Core services such as housing and health have been completely or partially privatized, while other responsibilities such as social care have been increasingly delegated to a 'third sector' of voluntary and publicly-funded organizations. In consequence to long-term economic decline, city governments have instead had to assume more outward-orientated policies in collaboration with other urban actors – principally the private sector but also universities, trade unions, civic associations and heritage groups – in order to foster and encourage local growth and economic development. A frequently cited example is Glasgow city council which joined forces with business groups and advertising companies during the 1980s in the attempt to resurrect the city's national and international credibility (Short 1996; Gomez 1998). Regenerational strategies have

been equally pursued by left and right urban regimes. Although strategies may have varied from a neo-liberal emphasis on the promotion of the private sector (as epitomized by London's Docklands) to a greater stress on collective identity of place and municipal pride among social democratic administrations, as exemplified in the regeneration of Barcelona (McNeill 1999), the central objective of modifying the city to the demands of an increasingly flexible economy has remained the same.

A second key element of urban regeneration, especially among declining cities, has been place promotion aimed both at bolstering local confidence and at attracting investors and the 'right people' such as well-educated and skilled workforces and up-market tourists (Philo and Kearns 1993). The strategy of selling places is not a new phenomenon (boosterism has a particularly long tradition with American cities (Ward 1998)) but has become increasingly important for repositioning cities within national and international space. Although the highlighting of 'unique' aspects has often been ironically conducted in a universal language of 'waterfront developments' and 'people-friendly shopping centres', place promotion has nevertheless been pursued in various ways, from spectacular urban projects on former industrial sites, for instance the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao (McNeill 2000), to adjustments to the existing built environment such as the pedestrianization of commercial districts and the reutilization of empty buildings. In order to maximize their effect, these interventions have been accompanied by advertising campaigns and different promotional media, in particular public art commissions (Gomez 1998). Tim Hall has examined how symbolic and material resources associated with the construction of a new concert hall in central Birmingham have been deployed to position a once culturally peripheral city at the heart of Europe (Hall 1997). The new building and public art projects in central public spaces have sought to re-present Birmingham's industrial past as the foundation of its present entrepreneurial spirit. This, argues Hall, was achieved by a process of 're-semanticisation'. For instance, Raymond Mason's massive sculpture *Forward* depicting working 'Brummies' *encloses* negative images of dereliction and working-class resistance by developing a myth of a human (male) saga which lies at the heart of the city's civic identity (ibid.: 216-217).

Special occasions have been highly important for reorienting images and discourses about cities. This has usually been represented either by a grand architectural project or

an international political, sporting or cultural event. In both cases, the occasion serves to raise a city's international profile, to generate high levels of inward investment and to transform the shape of a city. This occured in the case of Barcelona where the 1992 Olympics became the premise for a massive programme of urban improvements during the 1980s which included peripheral areas that were not directly linked to the games (McNeill 1999).

'Culture' is another key word in regenerational experiences. Its formulation in urban policy has varied across time and space. For instance it has been accorded far broader everyday collective significance in continental Western Europe than in the United Kingdom (Bianchini 1993). In the 1970s and early 1980s the cultural policies of many European cities had clear social and political concerns, perhaps best symbolized by Renato Nicolini's programme of cultural events in Rome which aimed to reassert the function of the city centre and combat social atomization during the summer months. With greater curbs on public spending, policies during the 1980s became increasingly geared towards symbolic and economic ends, and it was during this period, according to Bianchini (ibid.), that 'culture' became associated with 'regeneration'. The language of investment replaced that of public subsidy while cultural programmes were targetted more at city users and tourists rather than the local population. 'Culture' was therefore closely tied to place promotion:

> "Being host to the 'right' concerts, acquiring the most prestigious exhibitions or being designated as European City of Culture now appear as crucial to many city governors as local labour skills or transport infrastructure in enhancing local competiveness..Even Glasgow, recognised as having some of the worst social and economic problems anywhere in Europe played this hand with some success, ostensibly reimaging itself as a pleasant cultured city, the antithesis of the Red Clydeside mythology of working-class life and labour based on hard working, hard drinking and hard men (Hall and Hubbard 1998: 199).

This growing concern was not always restricted to supporting 'high' cultural events such as opera and international film festivals, but also to celebrating (and commodifying) 'popular' cultural practices and lifestyles:

> "Street cultures, ethnic celebrations and working-class traditions are increasingly integrated into the narrative web of city promotion, with cities paying lip service to the notion of being a multicultural environment, tolerant of difference (within reason)" (ibid.).

However, as many observers are quick to underline, the harnessing of culture. regardless of whether this has improved a city's reputation and increased the number of visitors, has had a modest impact on employment creation (Gomez 1998: 114).

Lastly, it should be pointed out that city centres in European cities have usually played a pivotal role in urban regeneration. Whether as the designated site for flagship projects or through the recuperation of historic areas, the centre as the fulcrum of 'urban identity' has been reinforced to maximize a city's desirability. During the 1980s and 1990s industrial cities like Birmingham, Frankfurt and Glasgow all devised ways, from new museums to the establishment of 'people-friendly' environments, to improve what were perceived as dull, ugly and anonymous city centres (Bianchini 1993). 'Historical' cities, already considered tourist destinations, also sought to upgrade their old centres. Approaches ranged from urban clearance programmes, such as the creation of new public spaces through selective demolition in the central neighbourhoods of Barcelona, to the 'hands off' recuperative approach which was typical of numerous Italian cities during the 1990s. The regeneration of working-class or run-down areas of the city centre has intensified gentrification, as increasing numbers of young, well-educated middle classes move into vacant property, attracted by more 'authentic' and culturally richer urban lifestyles[9].

These central themes of urban regeneration help to frame the urban transformations which occurred in Naples during the 1990s. However, problems arise if it is applied mechanically. Recent debates often presuppose an epochal shift which risks overlooking lines of continuity. The multifarious transformations in process in Naples during the 1990s cannot be neatly bracketed into an urban epoch, such as the post-industrial city, but are grounded in a much longer history. The very idea of the 'post-industrial city', even though it may reflect a dominant discourse about contemporary economic priorities, does not account for alternative urban traditions. The relationship between Naples and industry, as shall be shown, is a very particular one; exogenously developed

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[9] Regeneration and gentrification must not be considered part of the same urban process even though they may coincide. Gentrification, which is constituted by a particular socio-economic and cultural dynamic, usually anticipates regeneration. Zukin (1982) and Smith (1992) have both outlined how gentrification occurs during urban decline, in other words when rents and prices are at their cheapest, and is set in motion by 'pioneers', often from the art or intellectual community, who move into economically unattractive districts.

through state intervention and never becoming a hegemonic element of its urban culture.

Caution must therefore be taken when adopting urban models devised and developed in other geographical and historical contexts. For instance, Donald McNeill argues that applying uncritically the idea of the 'entrepreneurial city' to the case of Barcelona would overlook the impact of Spain's transition to democracy:

> "The concept seems to have emerged from some sort of mid-Atlantic theoretical and empirical convergence. Applying it to Barcelona would miss one pretty hefty local narrative: the fact that the city had thrown itself forward with such haste was closely related to its delayed or halted development under dictatorship." (McNeill 1998: 242).

In the case of Naples, 'regeneration' refers as much to a political as to an urban revival, while the notion of 'entrepreneurial politics' has been associated more directly with the illicit collusion between politicians, businessmen and criminals during the 1980s (Allum 1998). Lila Leontidou argues that 'Mediterranean cities' represent an alternative urban paradigm to northern cities:

> "The political economy of societies where fordism seldom took root has been based on late industrialization, a feeble bourgeoisie, and informal labourers rather than a proletariat. The culture of such societies flowers in constellations of cities developed in the South, where modernism has never been a hegemonic culture" (Leontidou 1996: 180).

While Leontidou's argument would seem to deconstruct one 'meta-narrative' (the northern city) only to replace it with another (the southern city), and despite the fact that Naples (surprisingly) does not easily fit into her idea of a southern paradigm[10], it underlines the risk of simplification when applying preconceived models. Regeneration and its connected themes of image, history, culture and centre need to be situated at the same time as considering the city's relationship with wider processes of change.

Regeneration must not be confused with urban change which, as a multifaceted process, cannot be explained by a single hold-all concept. For instance regeneration cannot tell us much about the settlement of immigrant groups in Italy during the last two decades.

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[10] Consider, for example, the following diagnosis in the context of Naples: "Upgrading of derelict inner cities is very rare in southern urban complexes where high class neighbourhoods have prevented the core from decaying." (ibid.: 191). Although Leontidou's thesis encourages permanent deconstruction and the rejection of models, it is itself ultimately in danger of undermining sensitivity to historical and geographical context and local narratives.

It would be more helpful to consider regeneration as a particular *discourse about change* which, like every discourse, is constructed in the context of power relations. In this way the city is acknowledged as a series of representations (Shields 1996): at which point it would be possible, for instance, to examine how the presence of immigrants might be incorporated into particular visions of the city. The term 'urban regeneration' in this study therefore refers to the policies, debates and interventions which constituted the symbolic and material reimaging of Naples under the left adminstration after 1993.

The emergence of policies and discourses aimed at 'regenerating' Naples needs to be undertood in the context of a number of factors. Firstly the city was faced with the task of re-orientating its economy in the face of recession and chronic unemployment[11]. This was partly in response to the closure or reduction of key industries provoked by global recession that had its origins in the 1970s. The Bagnoli steel works, the symbol of the city's heavy industry for almost a century, was finally closed down in 1992 in accordance with European directives. Manufacturing and more traditional industries such as textiles were increasingly vulnerable to the changing economic climate and were hit by closures or, in the case of the Alfa Romeo plant in Pomigliano d'Arco, a drastic cut in the workforce. This phase of de-industrialization coincided with a major restructuring of interventions in the South by the state, forced to reduce its massive public deficit and meet European restrictions on spending, which culminated with the termination of the '*intervento straordinario*' in 1992. Already by the late 1970s the system of state investment, which since 1950 had served to close the industrial gap between the North and South, was in crisis (Barbagallo 2000). The massive flow of public money into infrastructural and industrial projects had failed to stimulate economic development. Although there were success stories, in Abruzzo, Molise and parts of Puglia and Basilicata, which pointed to the existence of various realities in the South, public services were insufficient and the private sector remained generally weak (Bodo and Viesti 1997). Instead, public investment had raised income and consumption levels (although these remained far below the national average[12]), and had fed a

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[11] In 1994 the unemployment rate in Campania, which stood at 20.44%, was the third highest in Italy after Sicily and Sardinia (Goddard 1996: 67). The rate was far higher in the province of Naples while over 50% young Neapolitans were offically out of work.

[12] In 1991, per capita annual incomes in the South were between 50% and 80% less than the national average. Between 1991 and 1999 Naples rose from 86th to 83rd place in a league table of 103 provinces with a per capita annual income in 1999 of 21,611,000 lire (approximately £7,000), 66.2% less than the national average of 32,640,000 lire (just under £11,000) (Rapporto Tagliacarne in *CorrierEconomia del Mezzogiorno* 26/2/01). These figures help as an indicator of the economic divide between the North and

clientilistic system which redistributed jobs, favours and money. The end of the *intervento straordinario* was therefore conceived as the final death knell of an era, despite the fact that various forms of '*assistenzialismo*' ('excessive state aid') remained (such as the government-funded '*Lavori Socialmente Utili*' ('Socially Useful Jobs') for the southern unemployed). In its wake, greater importance was attached to developing the economy in accordance with the local context; by encouraging home-grown medium and small businesses, developing the tertiary sector and marketing and enhancing cultural and tourist industries. As a result, decisions regarding economic restructuring were increasingly made at local level and not dictated from the centre.

The dismantling of the structure of state investment converged with a crisis in the political system that came to ahead with the *Tangentopoli* corruption trials in 1992. The clientilistic system in Naples had been the basis around which the ruling Christian Democrats maintained political control in the city (Allum 1973). Major interests in the local economy, from building to commerce, were dependent on the political ruling class. While there was a temporary reprieve under the left wing Valenzi administration between 1975 and 1983 which embarked on a period of '*buon governo*', under the DC-PSI governments during the 1980s the 'clientilistic machine' became more intense as the flow of funds for the post-earthquake reconstruction grew (Barbagallo 1997b). The Tangentopoli investigations, which did not begin in Naples until March 1993 (over a year after Milan), had a devestating affect on local politics. A whole political generation was practically wiped out by the swipe of the judicial sword leaving for a short period a void at the centre of party politics. The principal brokers and political bosses in the clientilistic system were arrested, while many public projects and urban plans were blocked or abandoned.

The destructive impact of Tangentopoli was shortly followed by a major institutional reform of the local political system. City administrations were very often short-lived and characterized by political stalemate. This was largely because the executive '*giunta*', consisting of the mayor and assessors, was elected by councillors who were in turn subordinate to central party decisons. The series of Valenzi minority adminstrations finally fell in 1983 after the Socialist Party switched allegiances to the Christian

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the South but cannot be considered very reliable given the widespread existence of the informal economy, especially in the South.

Democrats in line with national agreements and during the next four years there were no less than eight different administrations. Law 81 of 1993 radically changed matters. The mayor, now directly elected by voters, personally appointed members of the *giunta*. This effectively shifted decision making away from the centre and assured greater stability (Koff and Koff 2000: 185-189).

The mayoral elections at the end of 1993 are considered by many as a turning point in the fortunes of many Italian cities which confirmed the collapse of a corrupt political system and the beginning of a period of effective governance (Vandelli 1997, Dini 1999). As in 1975, left wing administrations were returned in all the major cities except Milan and Bari. In Naples, Antonio Bassolino, member of the post-communist PDS beat off the right wing candidate Alessandra Mussolini, granddaughter of *il Duce*, in the second round with 55.4% of the overall vote. Born in 1947 in the agro-town of Afragola ten miles to the north of Naples, the new mayor hailed from the left wing of the PCI, although had remained in the party after it became the PDS in 1991[13]. His candidature had come as a surprise and had initially been opposed by intellectuals and cultural associations who considered him a party functionary imposed from above.

Post-1993 Naples was to be dominated by this charismatic figure who became instantly famous for his chain-smoking, calm and collected persona and strong provincial accent. During the first years of the administration, Bassolino was able to rapidly build cross-cleavage political consensus by projecting a perception of urban change through reorientating the city's image and by reasserting legality and respect of rules in the local institutions and among the public.

As with many cities, the successful launching of a regenerational narrative was connected with a specific event. In July 1994, the city hosted the G7 summit, the annual meeting of the leaders of the world's main industrial powers. While the choice of

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[13] Although a lifelong party functionary, the new mayor represented in many ways a new kind of Neapolitan politician: he had no family ties to politics and had abandoned university after a few months to dedicate himself to the Communist Party. A former sympathizer of the Manifesto group, as president of the party in Campania during the 1970s, Bassolino became a vocal critic of Berlinguer's '*compromesso storico*' and the extreme centralism of the PCI. During the party's transition to the PDS between 1989 and 1991 he had proposed a third reformatory line as an alternative to Occhetto's proposed dismantlement of the PCI and the intransigent continuation of former positions (Leonetti and Napoli 1996). During 1993. Bassolino had returned to Naples after a decade spent in central office in Rome to reconstruct the local party which had been shaken by Tangentopoli (Brancaccio 2000).

Naples the previous summer had seemed absurd amidst the city's various crises[14]. the event was to become the ideological cornerstone for urban revival and a fortuitous springboard for the new administration. The government released 55 billion lire to fund hasty adjustments to the *centro storico*. Over one hundred interventions were carried out ranging from restoration of buildings, fountains and statues and the repaving of streets and piazzas to the removal of almost a thousand abandoned car wrecks. The fact that the work was completed in the allotted time and that 5 billion lire was left over was in itself highly symbolic. Comparisons were made with the 850 billion lire spent on preparations for the World Cup football championship in 1990 much of which was squandered on unfinished or ineffective projects. However, the event also involved an unprecedented security operation which transformed Naples into a '*città blindata*' (literally 'fortress city'). A large part of the *centro storico* was blocked of to the general public while eight thousand soldiers and military police were drafted from across Italy to patrol the streets. Demonstrations and street trading were temporarily banned, while an "Operation Tramp" transferred the homeless to makeshift hostels on the outskirts of the city. Neverthless, during the three-day summit, Naples enjoyed an intense moment of international publicity which, thanks to the injection of public funds and draconian security measures, played a pivotal role in transforming the city's dismal reputation. In the following weeks, Bassolino payed a visit to businessmen in America and to Gianni Agnelli in Turin in order to encourage private investment in the city, while in the autumn figures were released showing a sharp rise in the number of Italian and foreign tourists to the city.

Bassolino insisted that the Naples's route to economic recovery would be slow and arduous but that the city was back on tracks (Bassolino 1996b: 53). While the administration pursued long-term objectives, such as the redevelopment of the Bagnoli steelworks as a new tourist and service district and the construction of a comprehensive underground system, much emphasis was placed on small-scale interventions such as cultural events, the pedestrianization of public spaces and the opening of monuments. These were directed at harnessing the city's urban heritage and reimaging the *centro storico* as both a tourist destination and as a means of retrieving civic pride. Such initiatives received wide publicity both in the city, nationally and abroad. In the first

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[14] During mid-1993 municipal police went on strike and there were daily protests over contaminated mains water. To make matters worse, the council declared itself bankrupt at the beginning of the summer and then in July was dissolved by the Interior Ministry on grounds of public order.

few years the administration enjoyed a privileged relationship with the national and local press; in particular *il Mattino* which had traditionally been DC-orientated and fervently anti-Communist.

Bassolino's urban strategy was very successful in building personal support and in November 1997 he was re-elected in the first round with 73% of the vote, the highest margin in the whole country[15]. The second administration was characterized by less furore than in the early years and an upsurge in organized crime, natural calamities and frustration at not seeing structural improvements dampened the intitial enthusiasm. Nevertheless, the importance of heritage and tourism as economic resources, the revaluing of the city's local identity as civic and inherently European in nature remained key areas of urban policy. Despite Bassolino's move to the Regional government in 2000 and increasing political intrigue in local politics, he remains one of the most respected politicians in Italy[16].

Regeneration has been evaluated in different ways, partly in the light of political affiliations but also from economic and cultural points of view. There have been two dominant interpretations of the Bassolino era: those, especially in the right wing opposition but also on the far left, for whom regeneration amounts to little more than an ephemeral and vacuous 'image politics' (Ragone 1997), and those who adopt a more sympathetic critique seeing it as a necessary process for raising public confidence and laying the basis for more long-term fundamental change (Coppola et al. 1997). However, in most cases, regeneration has been conceived in terms of an *end result* and issues such as 'civic pride', a 'new image' and 'urban heritage' have been treated as fixed concepts. Very rarely has there been any attempt to interrogate the significance and impact of these urban changes. In this research, regeneration is instead used as an *entry point* to examine how a new 'idea' of Naples emerged during the Bassolino

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[15] From a survey carried out in 1996 of a representative sample of 400 inhabitants, it emerged that 80% of Neapolitans considered Bassolino "the best or one of the best mayors that the city has ever had" (Savino 1998: 44).

[16] Bassolino briefly became employment minister in the centre-left government of Massimo D'Alema between November 1998 and May 1999 whilst remaining at the helm of the *giunta*, which had a damaging effect on his reputation in the city. He resigned as mayor in April 2000 to run for president of the Campanian Provincial Government which he won by over 60% (thanks to the alliance with the ex-DC parties which were instrumental in winning support in the provinces of Benevento and Avellino). He was succeeded as mayor by his former deputy Riccardo Marone whose major credit was getting the new PRG approved by the council in February 2001 after two years of deadlock. A new centre-left mayor, the former Christian Democrat Rosa Russo Iervolino, was elected in May 2001 but with a much narrower margin (compared to 1997) of 52.9% in the second round.

administration around the restructuring and rescripting of public spaces in the *centro storico* and how this urban vision was politically defined in terms of a renewed sense of citizenship.

Chapter 2: "We are the City". The New Naples of Bassolino

2.1 An aberrant city?

'Citizenship' became a keyword in Bassolino's vision of urban progress and a new Naples. At a general level, the idea of citizenship addresses the series of political, civil and social rights endowed by membership to a sovereign state or other political community and the level and capacity of participation in public life (Marshall 1950; Zolo 1994). In Italian, the term '*cittadinanza*' is also commonly used to refer specifically to the aggregate population of a community, be it the nation state or a city. As a result its use in political discourse is underlain with ambiguity: citizenship does not only connote the 'rules' of membership but the members themselves which tends to evoke essentialist notions of 'identity' and 'community'. Before examining how this category has been used by the mayor to frame and legitimize urban regeneration, it is worth considering its implications in the context of modern Naples.

Naples, as capital of the Mezzogiorno, has persistently been seen as embodying the apparently anomalous status of the Italian South (Lupo 1994); a city characterized by poverty, underdevelopment and dependence on the central state, a fragmented, isolated working class, an unproductive, parasitic middle class, and a political system where personal ties and clientilism prevailed (Allum 1973). As with the rest of the South, it appeared to lack an active citizenship and a rich public life. According to Robert Putnam's comprehensive study of the functioning of regional administrations in Italy, Campania was one of the least civic regions in the country (Putnam 1993: 97). Putnam's notion of 'civic community' was defined in terms of active participation in public affairs, political equality, solidarity, trust and tolerance. The south's 'uncivic-ness' was indicated by a scarce number of associations, a low newspaper readership, a low turnout in referenda and a high incidence of preference voting (ibid.: 89-94)[17]. Putnam argued that the failure to develop democratically and economically had been determined back in the Middle Ages when, in contrast to the city republics of the northern and central

[17] According to Putnam, associations instilled in their members habits of cooperation, solidarity and public spiritedness. Newspaper readership was a mark of citizen interest in community affairs. The primary motivation for referendum voters was concern for public issues (whereas electoral turnout was theoretically enforced by law and conditioned by private interests), while preference voting was considered a reliable indicator of personalism, factionalism and patron-client networks.

Italy, the South was subject to highly centralized monarchical rule. The Unification of Italy had merely annexed the region into a foreign modern state without changing the structure of society (ibid.: 121-148).

The situation in Naples itself has been attributed to the city's particular relationship with modernity. According to Percy Allum (1973), the residual hallmarks of a feudal-monarchical social system and the persistence of familist relations had stifled the emergence of a modern *Gesellschaft* society based around collective (working-class) interests and organized action.

> "This *Gemeinschaft* system..was built on the notion that it was the ruler's business to provide a livelihood for the people...Today the state and the deputy have replaced the prince, and the clientela has replaced royal patronage" (Allum 1973: 55).

Although modern, class-differentiated (middle-class and proletarian) residential districts had risen on the city's outskirts, Naples remained isolated "from the most dynamic economic and social changes of the post-war period" (ibid.: 28). The economy, social practices and ideals of the inhabitants of the "casbahs" in the *centro storico* reflected a static, pre-modern world. Here the boundary between the public and private was blurred and collective, impersonal ties were practically non-existent. Instead, life was dominated by the closed, communal structure of the "slum economy" (ibid.: 40) in which everyday survival revolved around minor remunerations, favours and social allegiances.

Besides the inadequate, piecemeal nature of state-funded development and the pervasive presence of clientilism in economic and political affairs, Allum argued that Naples's problems lay in the absence of a true bourgeoisie which was capable of modernizing local urban society and installing the principles of public life. The gap between the gentry and the populace was instead historically occupied by an intermediate class of bureaucrats, professionals and tradesmen sustained by the city's status as capital and later as privileged recipient of state funds, which after the Second World War was joined by a more modern (but still largely dependent) class of managers and civil servants. This inherently conservative class stood in sharp contrast to a progressive, intellectual tradition of an elite minority. This tradition had inspired the short-lived Neapolitan Republic of 1799. A small ensemble of idealistic aristocrats ('*patrioti*' or '*giacobini*'), had attempted to carry out a bourgeois 'revolution', drawing directly on

the principles of the French Revolution of 1789 (Cuoco [1806] 1995). During the Republic's five month existence, the term 'citizen' ('*citoyen*') was used publicly in the city for the first time. Its protagonists sought to install in the masses the moral virtues of citizenship (Petrusewicz 1999) and encouraged popular participation in a series of new public debating halls:

> "[The formation of public opinion] could no longer be done through aristocratic salons, academies, lodges, colleges and libraries, but had to be widened to include the churches, theatres, public squares and streets, popular societies and instruction halls because the welfare of the state itself now depended on this new 'public spirit'. Culture and politics in 1799 had to be shifted from the elites to the people." (Rao 1999: 360).

As Allum argues, the Republic ultimately failed because it lacked a solid social basis and made no attempts to carry out the necessary economic reforms in order to gain mass support. For the *popolo*, it offered little more than "revolutionary catechism" (Petrusewicz 2001). The emphasis on the '*incivilmento*' (civilizing) of the masses was imposed from above with foreign (French) concepts with little regard for local cultural values. The Republic quickly fell in June 1799 after the withdrawal of the French troops and the arrival of the royalist army, and its leading protagonists were executed. The episode left an enormous symbolic legacy on the history of the city. A century later, Benedetto Croce saw the Republic as a critical turning point in the history of the South and considered its moral virtues a founding myth of the new Italy (Davis 1999). However it also confirmed the huge gulf in interests between an emergent enlightened bourgeoisie ('*borghesia illuminata*') and a predominantly royalist populace. In the face of a rich, but abstract and hermetic intellectual tradition (Allum 1973: 81), Naples remained anchored to the image of a homogenously 'backward', pre-modern South which would continue to dominate debates after the Second World War (Gribaudi 1997).

However, from the 1970s onwards the idea of Southern and Neapolitan society as inherently backward was heavily criticized. Research highlighted the heterogenous social and cultural realities in the South and in the city of Naples itself (Gribaudi 1999). as well as the different paths to economic development (Brancaccio 2000). It has been argued that a lot of earlier work – including Allum's analysis of post-war Neapolitan politics – was built around a functionalist dichotomy between modernity and backwardness and was therefore more concerned with what a society lacked in contrast

to a ideal northern Italian or European standard (Lupo 1996: 247). This did not detract from the fact that the South indeed suffered from structural problems (unemployment and a weak economic infrastructure) and widespread clientilism but these aspects were to be analysed in their particular context and not through preconceived models of modernization.

The *Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft* distinction, deployed to explain the transition from traditional to modern societies and applied as an heuristic for the social and economic polarities in Naples, was deemed too inadequate for explaining the complexities of the city. The very argument of a persistent *Gemeinschaft* was itself disputed. Empirical evidence demonstrated that the 'slum economy', the central lifeline for the inhabitants in the old city in Allum's thesis and a backbone of the vertical set of relations, had effectively disappeared by the 1970s and that this had been replaced by a vast informal economy (Pinnarò and Pugliese 1985). The organized unemployed groups, which were largely comprised of the '*popolo*', demanded, at least in the mid-1970s, not just jobs but *regular* employment for all its ranks (Ramondino 1998), while the election of the Valenzi administration in 1975, on the wave of grass-roots social protests, suggested the emergence of non-clientilistic political alliances.

Moreover, in contradiction to claims of a total absence of associations (Allum 1973: 61), from the 1970s onwards there was a growth in associative activity in Naples and across the South. New associations were primarily concerned with issues of cultural consumption or social and environmental activism, although a significant minority mobilized against organized crime (Ginsborg 1998: 235). In most cases, however, these groups involved a restricted sphere of intellectuals, students and salaried middle classes and few managed to involve the lower echelons of southern society (ibid.: 237). These 'virtuous minorities' constituted the germs of a modern '*società civile*' in the South. In Italian political and media debates, the notion of civil society was increasingly used to refer not only to the intermediate area between the family and the state (such as the activities of the church and political parties), but to those networks which stimulated democracy, equal rights and public debate in opposition to an 'uncivil' society characterized by vertical subordination, conformism and obedience (ibid.: 181-184). This was very much the case with the various heritage groups and civic associations active in Naples during the 1980s which were considered by the press and many on the

left to be the principal progressive force in public debates about the city's development (Dini et al 1993: 30). Significantly, a number of these organizations drew directly on the liberal values of the 1799 Republic. The internationally renowned *Istituto Italiano di Studi Filosofici*, which was set up by the flamboyant lawyer Gerardo Marotta in 1975, "in defence [in his own words] of an enlightened and European image of what was once a cultural capital" (*La Repubblica* 10/3/85), moved in 1984 to Palazzo Serra di Cassano which had famously once belonged to a family of Jacobin martyrs and whose front gates had never been opened since the Bourbon restoration[18]. During the 1980s and early 1990s, Marotta and other intellectuals were instrumental in coordinating opposition to urban restructuring programmes. For example, in 1991, the 'Assizes of Palazzo Marigliano' (named after the historic palace in the *centro antico* where meetings took place), brought together the city's 'enlightened' elite, cultural associations and members of opposition parties in protest at a government plan which proposed a massive spate of new building in the city (De Lucia 1998: 85-6). This assembly was not only successful in identifying and blocking irregularities but in managing to create and sustain a public sphere in the absence of democratic debate in the local council.

Another group at the forefront of cultural debates about Naples during the same period was the Napoli 99 Foundation, set up in 1984, which coordinated restorations of monuments and, during the early 1990s, organized the *Porte Aperte* programmes. It too took its inspiration directly from the 1799 Republic. The memory of the values of the failed bourgeois revolution converged with the desire to salvage the city's threatened cultural heritage. In contrast to the negative images of "slums" and "casbahs", the *centro storico* was considered testimony of the city's rich cultural traditions from which to rebuild and rediscover a positive sense of Neapolitan identity (Governa 1994: 154). By restoring and opening monuments to the public, Napoli 99 hoped to involve Neapolitans from all social backgrounds in the formation of a common "civic consciousness" (quoted in Governa 1997: 154). Its president, Mirella Barracco, declared in 1999:

> "The key to the success of our initiatives was the recovery of the city's memory..Our project seemed a bit utopian and Jacobin, tied as it was to 1799." (Barracco 1999: 77).

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[18] These gates would be temporarily opened for the first time by Marotta in 1995 on the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Italy from Fascism.

The idea of the *centro storico* as the repository of an illustrious history and the site of collective identity was a central theme to urban regeneration during the 1990s. The experiences of groups such as Napoli 99 and individuals like Marotta were mobilized by Bassolino and accorded a privileged role within his overall political strategy for urban renewal. The council initially sponsored and later coordinated the *Porte Aperte* programme which after 1994 was renamed *Maggio dei Monumenti*, while the mayor regularly participated in public debates at the *Istituto Italiano di Studi Filosofici*. This intellectual elite symbolized a more enlightened, progressive Naples to the rampant corrupt city of the 1980s, as Bassolino exclaimed:

> "We must be grateful to all those intellectuals who, during the politically dark years, did some extraordinary things and opened the way to political change." (Bassolino 1996a: 58)

Moreover, the memory of the 1799 revolution resonated with the administration's attempts to 'ennoble' the *centro storico*, and its associations with notions of democracy and civicness converged with a new emphasis on citizenship[19].

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[19] The bicentennial celebrations in 1999, in part organized by the Bassolino administration, included theatrical re-enactments in piazzas and palace coutyards of events connected with the Republic. Although such initiatives specifically aimed to connect with the more general revaluing of the *centro storico*, the bicentenary primarily revolved around a plethora of conferences organized by the *Istituto Italiano di Studi Filosofici*. Moreover, it was just one of many commemorative events held after 1993 and was indeed overshadowed the following year by a massive series of exhibitions dedicated to the memory of the Bourbon kingdom. Therefore to single out the bicentenary would be to attribute it a central significance which it never really had.

2.2 Citizenship: a new discourse for a new urban vision

The idea of citizenship was central to the post-communist mayor's projection of a socially inclusive Naples. It underlined a new interactive relationship between citizens and the administration, it encompassed an emphasis on a series of collective and individual rights and alluded to a rebuilding of affective ties between the city and its inhabitants. During the 1990s, citizenship became a prominent new category in left wing urban politics. The changing social structures and decline of class-based voting meant that social democratic urban regimes across Western Europe had to look for cross-class support for their policies to remain in power. The city rather than class increasingly became the basis of collective identity and the site of mutual interests. This observation is made by Donald McNeill in his study of Barcelona during the 1990s where urban restructuring under the socialist mayor Pasquall Maragall was framed within the idea of an all-inclusive 'city-state' (McNeill 1999). At a wider level, citizenship responded to an ideological crisis, the "need for a radical but realistic revision of Western political grammar" (Zolo 1994: IX), which reflected the influence of liberal thought on European socialism during the 1980s and which became more pronounced following the collapse of Communist regimes in Eastern Europe after 1989.

This 'conversion' was particularly noticeable in the figure of Bassolino. During the late 1970s and 1980s, he had been at the forefront of political campaigns to defend workers rights and prevent the dismantlement of industrial plants across the South (Leonetti and Napoli 1996). He disputed those in the Communist Party who continued to view the south, and Naples in particular, as socially and economically backward. In his book *Mezzogiorno alla Prova. Napoli e il Sud alla svolta degli anni Ottanta* (1980), written before the earthquake and reflecting on the PCI's fall in electoral support, Bassolino highlighted the 'modernity' of Naples:

> "[Naples] is not just destruction and degradation, but also a great, civil, productive, democratic reality..It is a city with a strong sense of its own autonomy. It does not want more centralism but the chance to count." (Bassolino 1980: 24)

He emphasised the need of building an urban programme around "a new historic block consisting of a plurality of protagonists" (ibid.: 139). namely women, youths, mass intellectuals but also (progressive) catholic grass-roots organizations:

"Today 'Southern city' means many things: housing, work, free time etc..but it's also about [for instance] the new needs of youths with whom communist organizations are unable to establish positive and creative relationships." (ibid.: 34)

Nevertheless, the working class would remain the principal "agent of transformation", both as a democratic and productive force[20] and as the backbone of the PCI's electoral support. Working-class hegemony needed to expand to incorporate the new demands of women and young people in order to build a new route to socialism (ibid.: 147).

During the 1990s and as a member of the post-communist PDS, the central role attributed to the working class in transforming the city would disappear from Bassolino's political discourse. As mayor he would instead talk in terms of 'citizens' (a term he never used in 1980), either as individuals or groups but without the class connotations. Moreover, the stress was no longer on "agents of transformation" but on universal rights. Bassolino, who publicly claimed that he was no longer a communist but a "leftist" who had shed his "ideological straitjacket" (Marrone 1996: 26), was himself very conscious of the political shift:

"By appropriating and assimilating the key values of liberalism, it was inevitable and sacrosanct, that the left finally placed the concept of citizenship at the centre of its action. This meant accepting the liberal tenet that there can be no form of political democracy which does not protect the rights of the individual citizen." (Bassolino 1996b: 87)

The new political experience as mayor of Naples demanded a more pragmatic approach to politics and, with the change in electoral law, a new relationship with the city. As it was now the '*cittadini*' and not the parties who decided who ran the city, Bassolino first needed to present a moderate programme to win over non-left wing voters (Pasotti 2000). Once in power, the mayor was well aware of the importance of being non-partisan and acquiring the trust of all citizens (Marrone 1996). For the former PCI functionary, the direct election also meant that party positions took a back seat:

"Mass politics is achieved far more through governance than through the traditional practices of parties and unions. This form of politics is forced to deal directly with the problems of common people." (Bassolino 1996b: 78-9).

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[20] For instance, Bassolino asserted that "the workers of Alfa have made a great contribution to changing the city's political awareness" (ibid.: 134).

The notion of 'municipal' citizenship operated at three general levels. Firstly, it was conceived in terms of a closer relationship between the city and its political institutions which meant greater participation of citizens in public affairs:

"A form of politics closer to its citizens requires finding the instrumental means for involving as many people as possible in administrative decisions." (ibid.: 81)

In order to enrich and broaden local democracy, Bassolino sought to mobilize and involve the '*società civile*', not only the nationally renowned cultural associations such as Napoli 99, but less 'prestigious' organizations such as catholic voluntary groups working in the third sector (ibid.: 55). Groups which had previously operated independently or had reverted to direct action in the face of political indifference now enjoyed a symbiotic relationship with the local administration. For instance, members of the environmental organization Neapolis 2000 who had once chained themselves to council gates in 1987 to prevent the conversion of an ancient cemetry into a carpark, collaborated with the Bassolino administration in organizing guided visits and public events in the *centro antico* (Maturo 1999). Like Bassolino, the group's president extolled the virtues of active citizenship:

"The association's project not only strives for a cleaner and more organized city with efficient transport, more green space and less pollution, but also aims to contribute to the realization of a civil city, the citizens' city, which is able to face and overcome hardship and solitude and create a sense of belonging and a desire to participate. " (ibid.: 14-15).

Bassolino also placed great emphasis on building a new *classe dirigente* (governing group) which drew on the experiences of experts such as university professors and urban planners. His personally chosen team of assessors initially came from outside the immediate realm of party politics. They were given elaborate new titles: '*vivibilità*' (town planning), '*normalità*' (commerce) and '*identità*' (culture), which not only signalled the emergence of 'new' urban discourses but by employing a more 'citizen-friendly' language, suggested a new leaf in the city's politics (Lepore and Ceci 1997: 101). Furthermore, public opinion would have a growing influence on administrative decisions compared to its more subordinate role in the past. The local media became a significant forum of urban debates and line of communication between the mayor and

intellectuals, cultural and tourist operators and business people. According to Bassolino. mayors were now publicly accountable:

"Mayors, directly elected by the people, are subjected to daily (and obsessive) controls by the press and organized groups of citizens; they are responsible for choosing men [sic] with whom they are trying to put this country back onto the right track." (Bassolino 1996b: 79).

Secondly, citizenship was used to refer to a series of individual and collective rights. These were integral to a political strategy of constructing consensus around both the local government and a new municipal vision (Pasotti 2000). Bassolino argued that work remained the fundamental constituent of citizenship: "it is the daily relationship with work which transforms every individual into a citizen and a conscious and participating member of a community" (Bassolino 1996b: 67). However, in the face of the crisis and growing uncertainty of welfare provisions, citizen rights were no longer simply linked with traditional concerns such as jobs and housing but also increasingly encompassed wider issues such as the quality of the environment (which translated into measures such as traffic restriction and pedestrianization schemes and the provision of public parks), mobility (improved public transport), the recuperation of the city's cultural heritage for public fruition, and guaranteeing the personal security of residents. In particular, the commitment to security and public order, traditionally considered right wing discourses, were seen as a priority for a responsible (and responsive) administration:

"Just as in the past the right to jobs, healthcare and housing were the stable conquests of a civil existence, now we need to guarantee the right to security as one of the fundamental rights of citizenship. Concepts such as security, public order and legality must enter fully into the language of the left..It's not a right wing matter. It's a matter of democracy." (Bassolino 1996b: 60-63).

At a third level, the idea of citizenship was used to refer to the strengthening of bonds between Neapolitans and their city. This underlined Bassolino's political strategy of building consensus around a renewed sense of civic pride and local identity. According to the mayor, the project of harnessing civic pride through the recuperation and valuing of the city's cultural heritage was more plausible in Naples because it had a much more

homogenous population than other large Italian cities. While 95% of Neapolitans were born locally, only 35% of inhabitants in Rome were 'Romans'.

"Among Italy's large cities, Naples is the most city of cities: first of all it is the city which is most lived by itself..It has continued, especially in the last decades, to sustain itself demographically. So while there was a negative sense of belonging in the past when the city was on the brink of disaster, so there was a strong, positive sense of a new identity when it was clear that we could pull ourselves out of this situation on our own." (Bassolino 1996b: 15).

The notion of '*Napoletanità*' (Neapolitan-ness) had been treated with suspicion by the left. Maurizio Valenzi, the former communist mayor of Naples, had considered traditional ideas about Neapolitan identity as reductive and reactionary in the way they tended to exult the city's weaknesses and social and cultural anomalies and to resort to folkloric and popular imagery (Valenzi 1978: 172-74). According to Valenzi, a more politically progressive *Napoletanità* needed to assimilate an enlightened, intellectual tradition represented by the likes of Vico and Croce and celebrate the city's past as "a great capital" when it had attracted illustrious visitors from across Europe (ibid.: 173). In a not entirely different way, Bassolino spoke out against what he termed the "ideology of ugliness" (1996b: 55) which referred to what he considered a masochistic attachment to the dirt and disorder of the 'old' Naples. In order for the city and its citizens to flourish this perverse sensibility would have to be wiped out. Regenerational narratives about Naples sought to remove the negative images of urban neglect, political indifference and a general disdain for the public realm and construct in their place a more unequivocal discourse about the city based around positive notions of cultural heritage and urban decorum.

These three levels of municipal citizenship constituted a general vision of an all-inclusive city. Neapolitans were no longer considered in terms of collective groups but as individuals who constituted a common 'community'. They were made to feel part of a shared project which would improve Naples for Neapolitans. According to Eleonora Pasotti, who has analysed the evolution of Bassolino's leadership, this *sense* of collaboration was instrumental to the mayor's support: "people sympathized with his call for their help, [because it] made them feel like citizens and a team in front a challenge" (Pasotti 2000: 15). The restoration and reimaging of the *centro storico* played a fundamental role in constructing a more tangible, expansive idea of citizenship.

This was the physical and symbolic heart of Naples which its citizens were now able to reappropriate as part of their collective identity (Bassolino 1996a: 56).

However, if class had often been a problematic political category in relation to Naples where alignments were not always clear-cut, so too was the broad idea of citizenship in a city of deep social, cultural and economic divisions. While class was an inherently conflictual discourse, this element tended to be removed from the idea of citizenship when employed to legitimate a city-wide political agenda. Nevertheless, beneath the rhetoric of the all-inclusive city there were tensions and dilemmas. The possibilities of direct participation were restricted. Despite greater democracy in administrative affairs, the problem was that, in reality, not everyone was able to contribute to Bassolino's 'urban project'. The vast majority of Neapolitans had very little say in the reordering of the city, for instance over the pedestrianization of streets and piazzas. Indeed, the mayor's more central role in local politics than in the past often led to top-down policies carried out in the interests of the city which bypassed public and political debate (Recchi 1996). The exclusion from decision making was most blatant in the case of immigrants. Although many were city dwellers (and therefore '*cittadini*' in the everyday Italian sense), they were not entitled to the political rights of citizenship (which above all meant they could not vote in local elections), and, as shall be examined in the study of Piazza Garibaldi, had a very limited voice in debates over the city.

Similar contradictions were also reflected in the question of 'urban rights' which, couched in universal language, were often vague. It was not always clear who was able to enjoy these rights. For instance, access to the city's cultural heritage appeared to privilege tourists more than some Neapolitans. Dilemmas would arise when these discourses about rights were applied in real situations. For instance, formal appeals to legality inevitably meant condemning the thousands of Neapolitans who lived off the informal economy (Pasotti 2000), while immigrants in certain areas of the city were often considered more a source of 'insecurity' than the beneficiaries of greater public order. Because issues about security, the environment and cultural heritage represented 'intangible' rights (as opposed to jobs or housing), they could neither be equally distributed nor universally guaranteed. They subsequently would become contested realms as will be examined in the case of DAMM where activists' attempts to

encourage a mixed use of a neighbourhood park sharply contrasted to official ideas about the purpose of green space.

The third aspect of citizenship concerning people's collective ties with the city was the most problematic and ambiguous in the way it generated essentialist ideas about identity and community. The commonsensical use of '*identità*' in Italian political and media discourse is typically conceived as a fixed category consisting in a set of "characteristics and determinants" (Fabietti 1995; Dickie 1997). In a similar vein, 'community' at an everyday level tends to be based around the ideal of a specific, shared heritage (Young 1995). The most serious political consequence of the urge for a common 'identity' and 'community' is, as Iris Marion Young argues, that "it often operates to exclude or oppress those experienced as different" (ibid.: 160). This is especially pronounced when attempts are made to redefine or ameliorate the bonds between people and place which is what occurred in Naples during the 1990s. Hence the discourse about a positive, rehabilitated sense of 'Neapolitan-ness' as a common denominator and the basis of collective identification did not only automatically exclude immigrants (who could not make any 'authentic' claims to being Neapolitan) but also marginalized those 'natives' whose social, cultural or economic practices stood in opposition to officially constructed ideas about civic pride or urban decorum. It is therefore necessary to examine under what circumstances dominant ideas about identity and community were elaborated and to what extent 'membership' was de facto conditioned by various factors such as levels of cultural knowledge, income and modes of behaviour.

The implications of municipal citizenship in relation to the *centro storico* will be examined in the three case studies. Regeneration raises a series of questions which are rarely addressed. First and foremost, whose *centro storico*? But also, what might citizenship mean in the city in a lived and practical dimension? How does the official idea of the *centro storico* as the site of cultural heritage and civic pride clash with the desires, needs and uses of its various users? How far is difference recognized and tolerated? When is it labelled as deviant? The issue of citizenship therefore contextualizes political debates about regeneration, but by producing tensions and contradictions, it also provides a useful framework through which to examine conflicts in (and over) the city: from the problematic presence of immigrants in Piazza Garibaldi and the multiple interpretations of Piazza Plebiscito as a new civic symbol to the

alternative urban project of DAMM based on the ideals of direct participation and the collective self-management of a public park.

Chapter 3: Public Space and Urban Change

3.1 Reclaiming public space, redefining the city

The restoration of the city's public spaces played a fundamental role in the mayor's vision of a socially inclusive city and in signalling a new direction after the "dark years" of the 1980s. The decade prior to 1993 was considered by Bassolino and many others to be the lowest point in the city's modern history. The city had become choked with traffic, organized crime and heroin addiction had reached unbearable levels and tourism was at an all-time low. On returning to the city in 1993 after a ten year period at central party office in Rome, Bassolino was struck above all by the sorryful state of the city's collective spaces:

> "What struck me more than anything else was that nobody protested about the level of ungovernability and urban neglect which the city had reached. Piazza Plebiscito, which had become a gigantic car park, was unrecognizable..This and many other historical collective spaces no longer existed." (Bassolino 1996b: 16)

The immediate emphasis was on a *risanamento* of neglected parts of the city in order to eradicate the sense of total disorder, and not on further building projects which, according to Bassolino, had led to the devestation of the city after the Second World War (ibid.). Although the mayor set about inaugurating parks on the outskirts of Naples (which had been built after the earthquake but had never been opened to the public), the focus was on reclaiming open spaces in the *centro storico*. Various streets and piazzas were envisaged as "places of collective identity" (ibid.: 59). Some were cleaned and pedestrianized in order to make them more welcoming and user-friendly; places where citizens could feel comfortable to gather and where tourists could safely experience the city's vibrant life. Vezio de Lucia, the first administration's planning assessor, asserted that "using the *centro storico* without feeling condemned to urban neglect" was one of the hallmarks of "finally living in "ordinary conditions of normality"" (De Lucia 1998: 89)

The idea of public space is interlinked with the concept of citizenship. As the arena in which actions and opinions assume a political and social significance, it occupies an important ideological position in democratic societies (Mitchell 1995: 116). The term 'public sphere' is used to indicate a communicative arena to which access is

theoretically open to all franchised members of a community (Kasinitz 1995). In Habermas's formulation, the public sphere as a normative realm where private individuals came together as a public was historically linked with the rise of the bourgeoisie in the eighteenth century (Habermas 1974). This began to decline with the increasing intervention of the state into private affairs and the penetration of society into the state. During the twentieth century, party politics and the manipulation of the mass media gave rise to what Habermas dubs a 'refeudalization' of the public sphere where representation and appearances outweighed rational debate and where the potential for democratic collective participation dissipated (Holub 1991: 6). At a more commonsensical level, public space denotes the material site of sociability and face-to-face interaction. Public spaces are a fundamental feature of the city and the heart of the modern urban experience. It is here where where the group diversity of a city is most apparent.

> "Because by definition a public space is a place accessible to anyone, where anyone can participate and witness, in entering the public one always risks encountering those who are different, those who identify with different groups and have different opinions or different forms of life" (Young 1995: 268).

The material and immaterial elements of public space have always been closely entwined. Although this research examines the (re)definitions of three physical sites in the *centro storico*, these spaces were, importantly, also discursively constructed and the source of debates about the 'public', access and representation.

However, as with citizenship, the very idea of public space is framed by tensions. Although theoretically open to all and sundry, public spaces have just as often been places of exclusion. In the ancient Greek polis, the *agorà* was the physical domain of public debate where citizenship was constucted in opposition to foreigners and 'non-persons' (women and slaves). In other words, it was "a community of the *un-excluded*" (Viale 1996: 172). Over history, people have been excluded from public space on the basis of, among other things, gender, class and race. Feminist urban historians, for instance, have examined the patriarchal structuring of the 'great' public spaces of nineteenth-century cities, such as the shopping arcades, where mobile, independent public women were typically viewed as prostitutes and a threat to propriety, while 'respectable' women were confined to the controlled private sphere of the home (Wilson 1991; Rendell 1998). In the modern city, public space increasingly became a

site of social control and discipline. Bourgeois values about social life and appropriate behaviour were projected onto urban places, both in reaction to the 'corrupt' extravagance of the aristocracy and in order to put subordinate classes 'in their place' (Philo and Kearns 1993: 12). Town plans and city architecture were therefore not only manifestations of power but the expression of a distinct 'bourgeois urban culture' which sought to discipline in a creative as well as a restrictive sense (ibid.). For example, the rebuilding of Paris and Vienna after the 1848 revolutions took into account the needs for counter-insurgency (Cohen 1985: 209), and at the same time constructed impressive "homages to the power of money and commodities" in the form of boulevards and new public edifices (Harvey 1985: 204). However, the delineation of 'proper' and 'improper' places by dominant powers was never entirely straight forward. Stallybrass and White (1986) argue that urban carnivals, once the symbolic crucibles of absolute power and moments of popular release, were increasingly disowned by the new urban middle classes but that elements of the 'low' were nevertheless internalized into bourgeois identity as marginal (but desired) 'others'. This ambivalent bond between the socially peripheral and the symbolically central was manifest in the reports on poverty by nineteenth-century urban reformers. The likes of Booth and Chadwick in London (but also Matilde Serao in Naples) were both repelled and attracted to the squalor of the lower-class slums: the wish to eradicate what they saw as moral and social degradation was at the same time accompanied by a desire to write about the unregulated body of its inhabitants (ibid.).

Over the last forty years, urban critics, primarily in Northern America (Jacobs 1961; Walzer 1986; Davis 1990; Harvey 1992) but increasingly in Europe as well (Merrifield 1996), have pointed to an erosion and constriction of public space in Western cities. Various reasons are given: the increasing permeance of the private sphere in social life, the impact of capitalist restructuring of the city, the legacy of modernist planning, the middle-class 'flight' to suburbia, and the consequences of social exclusion which has seen poverty (especially in the form of the homeless) 'spill' onto the streets. Political and architectural measures taken to protect private interests and to reduce crime have effectively prevented the possibility of meaningful public interaction. Instead they have given rise to 'gated communities' (Davis 1990) or to the recent urban politics of 'zero tolerance' which is premised on the need to suppress all forms of public disorder (Wacquant 1999; De Giorgi 2000). In the face of this 'decline', many cities have seen

the development of 'pseudo-public spaces' (Goss 1997) geared to consumption, such as shopping centres and leisure complexes, where social interaction is encouraged within carefully planned and controlled environments, while regenerational programmes, across Europe and America, have sought to reanimate urban public spaces with cafés, markets and festivals.

In response to the real and perceived deterioration of the public realm, critical debates have been concerned with how to bring about a more meaningful public space. From an North American perspective, Michael Walzer (1986) argues that despite the predominance of 'single-minded' spaces designed and used for one function (from motorways to shopping centres), there remains a deep-rooted desire for what what he terms 'open-minded' space: places such as city squares which are designed for a variety of uses where citizens are prepared to loiter and are more likely to be tolerant of different uses. This demand is reflected in the increasing number of hybrid spaces such as waterfront developments which encourage multiple uses, albeit within a commercial environment. In order for these "yuppie" spaces to operate in "ordinary" neighbourhoods (ibid.: 475), there needs to be a broad political and cultural consensus. Walzer re-evokes Jane Jacobs's (1961) famous idea of the successful street as a self-policing zone as the most plausible means of attracting people back to public space:

> "Without regular and confident users, they become settings for social, sexual, and political deviance: derelicts, criminals, "hippies", political and religious sectarians, adolescent gangs. All these belong, no doubt, to the urban mix, but if they are too prominent within it, ordinary men and women will flee as soon as they can into private and controlled worlds." (Walzer 1986: 474).

Although single-minded space and open-minded space might offer a basic framework to start thinking about issues of public space, the binary distinction is too rigid and simplistic. How far is a shopping centre truly single-minded? Do people use them just to consume? Are the forms of control so effective that no other use, imaginary or otherwise, is possible? And is the square, the paragon of civicness, always so open? William H Whyte's study of 'small urban spaces' in New York discovered that most plazas were privately controlled (Whyte 1980) and were rarely predisposed to "mutual respect, political solidarity and civil discourse" (Walzer 1986: 472). More importantly, Walzer's uncritical differentiation between deviant and ordinary which ignores how the

two categories are socially constructed cannot go unnoticed. It underlines the fact that what might be conceived as socially interactive public space is not necessarily open to difference. In Marshall Berman's rejoinder (1986), Walzer's concept of open-minded space is accused of not being open enough. Public space, by definition, accommodates difference. It should therefore be open to what Walzer mistrusts: expressions of "modern individualism" and the urban poor (ibid.: 480). According to Berman, true social interaction and greater solidarity will occur only where the city's "loose ends are left to hang out" and where policing is minimal and kept in the background (ibid.: 484). However this idealistic vision (which Berman sees embodied in the Mediterranean square) raises another, not dissimilar, dilemma; namely that "letting it all hang out" would privilege certain groups (such as middle-class male "dystopian urbanists") while excluding others, and would inevitably lead to the break down of urban society (Merrifield 1996: 62).

Rather than thinking in terms of prescriptive labels, such as Walzer's 'open-mindedness', it is more important to consider how social controls and codes impinge on different uses and meanings of space. While it is necessary to examine the physical, political and economic restrictions governing public space, it is also important to consider how symbolic and discursive boundaries construct definitions of the public and deviance. The problem is not solely one of control from above. Exclusionary tendencies towards order and notions about appropriate behaviour are also internalized by individuals. This is central to David Sibley's (1997) conceptual framework for interpreting mechanisms of spatial exclusion. Drawing on sociological and psychoanalytic theory, Sibley argues that the presence of the 'abject' – materially and metaphorically conceived as pollution and filth – lies at the basis of socio-cultural definitions of space. Individuals learn in childhood to understand the world as a series of self-other relationships, rejecting, although never completely, excrement and its equivalents. The construction of the self and the other is an inherently social process; constituted by, and in turn constituting, social relations.

> "(T)he urge to make separations, between clean and dirty, ordered and disordered, 'us' and 'them', that is to expel the abject, is encouraged in Western cultures, creating feelings of anxiety because such separations can never be finally achieved." (Sibley 1997: 8)

Sibley argues that hegemonic notions of space can be considered a system of borders and controls which are continually redefined. Drawing on Basil Bernstein's distinction

between forms of educational curriculum organization, he deploys the idea of weak and strong (or open and closed) classification and framing to interpret the structuring of social space. Classification denotes the boundaries separating spaces, while framing refers to the range of possibilities within space. With weak classification and framing, there is little interest in boundary maintenance and difference is tolerated. Strongly classified and strongly framed space, on the other hand, is governed by inflexible rules, where there are clearly demarcated boundaries and where difference is equated with deviance. It therefore repels aberrant elements only to experience more profoundly the encroachment of the abject on its borders (ibid.: 78). Sibley does not conceive the categories of strong and weak as fixed polarities. Rather, it would be more accurate to talk about openings and closures. Therefore, as the boundaries of public spaces are redrawn, so the experience of deviance intensifies or declines and notions about appropriate behaviour are recontextualized.

The question is how Naples fits into this wider picture. Certainly, a lot of the debates over 'the decline of public space' reflect a North American and, to a lesser extent, British situation. As noted, Naples has traditionally been considered as lacking public space in the civic, Northern European sense. It had always been, in many ways, a promiscuous city where aristocratic residences backed onto slums, and where private life, especially that of the ground floor *bassi*, spilled onto the street. There has also long existed a stereotype of Naples as a tolerant, open city. It has been argued that, as in many southern European cities, bourgeois urban culture was never hegemonic (Leontidou 1996) but that there instead existed a closer, more 'organic' urban structure. The urban problems of anomie and impersonality which afflicted the industrial city, were seemingly absent in Naples. As such, modern Naples did not appear to possess the rigid social and spatial controls of the great bourgeois metropolises of London or Paris. Visitors over the centuries have been invariably appalled and enthralled by the city's 'anarchic' urban life and lenience on the part of its authorities. The French writer Louise Colet, in the city at the time of Garibaldi's arrival, expressed her shock at seeing so many ungainly sights among the crowded central streets. The greatest scandal of all, according to Colet, was not that beggars and cripples existed in such quantities but that they were at liberty to 'infect' the public realm (Ramondino and Müller 1992: 53). Pier Paolo Pasolini, writing over a century later, instead declared his admiration for the spontaneity of Neapolitan urban life and Neapolitans' defiance in the face of a

normalizing Italian modernity and mass culture. He compared this Neapolitan 'tribe' with the Tuareg bedouins of the Sahara desert for their ability to hold out against outside pressures (Ghirelli 1975: 15-16). This mixed response of outsiders to the city has persisted. During the 1980s, as tourist operators black listed Naples, intrepid travellers were drawn by the city's unbridled vitality. Reminiscing about the pre-Bassolino Naples, the erstwhile resident Peter Robb sighed that "the absurd comedy was gone...[but] Naples, I consoled myself with thinking, would always be more *interesting* than other places. Naples would never bore" (Robb 1998: 169).

However it would be dangerous to consider the city as 'tolerant' simply on what appears to be an unrestrained diversity and to contrast this to more 'sedate' situations of elsewhere. Need it be said, urban life in Naples is equally mediated by social codes and controls and subject to exclusionary mechanisms on the basis of, for instance, gender, mental and physical ability and, increasingly, race. It is necessary to examine how boundaries are created around different spaces and how these may change over time rather than taking for granted that Naples is eternally open to the flurry of the city.

This is particularly important to consider when examining the urban transformations of the 1990s. Each of the case studies will examine the role of controls and security and the question of access in the reimaging of the *centro storico*. The reclamation of public spaces was given a democratic gloss by being aimed at Neapolitans and tourists alike. However, this political discourse was built around a potentially irreconcilable tension between a desire for interactive collective spaces and a commitment to guaranteeing safety and order. The reality of the matter was that some users and certain practices were clearly going to be less welcome than others. Like Walzer, Bassolino stressed the importance of creating a general consensus over the value of public space. However, he appeared to doubt the capacity of many Neapolitans to respect the public realm and therefore placed great emphasis on encouraging a "culture of rules":

"There is no doubt that left to its own devices, the city tends not to adhere to many of the rules of good communal life. But if involved..the people of Naples participate." (Bassolino 1996b: 66).

3.2 The contested nature of urban space

While the case studies examine the role public spaces played in the construction of a new vision of the city and how certain groups (such as immigrants) were excluded from urban debates, they also focus on the different ways in which these spaces were experienced and renegotiated at an everyday, ground level. Thus the study of Piazza Garibaldi, for instance, will analyse how immigrants appropriated the station area for various economic and social purposes and how they invested it with meanings which conflicted with official attempts to reimage the piazza as the 'gateway' to the *centro storico*. Public space is never static and predictable but "the product of competing ideas about what constitutes that space and who constitutes "the public"" (Mitchell 1995: 115). Hegemonic meanings and boundaries are continually readjusted, while controls on space, however insidious or repressive, are never totalizing. People are not "passive pieces on a chessboard" (Merrifield 1996: 67) which dominant powers can move around or exclude at will. As Doreen Massey (1998) has pointed out, because it is socially constructed, spatiality can never be totally closed but contains within itself the potential of the creation of the new.

Henri Lefebvre's theory of space as the unfinished product of social, political and economic struggles is particularly useful as a framing device for this research (Lefebvre 1991). Space is not neutral, passive geometry but is constantly socially produced within a dialectical relationship between dominant *representations of space*, the instrumental, conceived space of planners and politicians, *spatial practice* which denotes the way people generate, use and perceive space, and *representational space*, the (dominated) lived space which is invested with symbolism and meaning (ibid.: 38-39). Lefebvre argues that the conceived space of "scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers" (ibid.) is falsely rendered readable and transparent because it "evades both history and practice" (Stewart 1995: 611). Lived spaces, generally contingent to time and space and less formal in nature, offer "counter spaces" (Lefebvre 1991: 381-3) which contain "the seeds of a new kind of space" (ibid.: 53). These basic tenets of 'social space' have been drawn upon in different ways by cultural geographers and social historians to analyse issues of conflict and resistance in the

city[21]. In the case of Naples, Lefebvre's spatial triad is particularly suggestive for considering how redefinitions of the city during regeneration were continually reshaped in everyday reality.

Even though Lefebvre is concerned with the everyday and the centrality of the body in appropriating and producing space, he sees social and class struggle as the prime agent in the creation of 'counter spaces' (ibid.: 55). However, the constant renegotiation of dominant ideas about space does not necessarily involve a conscious political project. Much of our daily 'contestation' of space is banal, transient, apolitical and low-key, consisting in minor infractions and (if at all) micro-conflicts. While public space is the site where individuals and groups struggle to be included in the public sphere and the focus of political protests, it is at the same time the arena in which counter-hegemonic everyday meanings and uses of the urban environment unfold. A myriad of relationships exist between different people and urban spaces. Where these cross official boundaries and discursive limits, they may be conceived as transgressive, deviant and 'out-of-place'. As such, they offer important insights into the ordering of the city, as Sibley points out:

> "In the interaction of people and the built environment, it is a truism that space is contested but relatively trivial conflicts can provide clues about power relations and the role of space in social control." (Sibley 1995: xiii)

The idea of 'contested space' is therefore deployed as an open term to refer to urban representations and practices which are purposely in opposition or find themselves at odds with dominant visions of space. It is constituted by a series of elements: symbolic (discursive) and material (non-discursive), reflexive and non-reflexive, proactive and reactive, premediatated and 'spontaneous'. The adjective 'contested' contains the dual meaning of the verb "to contest": on the one hand "to challenge or dispute" which suggests a projected, purposive action involving controversy; on the other "to contend or compete in" which implies a rival striving for positions but which is not necessarily conflictual.

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[21] Nicholas R. Fyfe (1996), for instance, juxtaposes the postwar master plans for the modernization of Glasgow with the reading of subsequent changes in the works of local poets in order to interpret the urban landscape of the modern city. In her study on the memory of place in Los Angeles, Dolores Hayden (1995) draws on Lefebvre's idea of social space so as to relate cultural landscape with the political economy.

The fact that urban space is a site of protest and difference needs to be considered in the context of urban regeneration. Anglo-American urban critics have viewed the strategy of place promotion as a means of asserting bourgeois urban hegemony while galvanizing local support for economic growth strategies (Harvey 1989b; Robins 1991; Philo and Kearns 1993). However, spectacular flagship projects have sometimes acted as an important marshalling point for community activism and protest. For instance, during the 1980s, a host of local groups mobilized in opposition to the prospect of gentrification and the threat on collective identity posed by the development plans for London Docklands (Keith and Pile 1993: 14-16). Writers have also recently pointed to the need to consider how regeneration is experienced at ground level (Goss 1997). Phil Hubbard's (1996) study of local residents' reactions to the reimaging of Birmingham city centre discovered that people did not simply accede to the urban representations promoted by politicians and planners but these were at the same time internalized and reinterpreted. Effective resistance therefore needs to recognize the discursive nature of regeneration:

> "Although the production of new urban landscapes may be crucial in underpinning an area's political coherence, it can potentially become a source of political contestation and conflict." (Hubbard 1996: 1459)

This is particularly the case where regeneration revolves around public spaces which, in contrast to architectural projects, are potentially more 'open' to contestation.

'Contested space' is not employed as a fixed theoretical model but as a protean idea which has value in empirical settings. Here I want to introduce the three issues which will be examined in-depth in the case studies: urban collective action, the different relationships between people and space and spatial transgression. Although these are not distinct realms (rather, they are often co-present within spatial practices), for the sake of clarity they are treated separately.

At a general level, collective action can be understood as action taken by a group in pursuit of shared interests. The specific notion of 'urban collective action' is that which consciously aims to transform the city in some way, regardless of its actual achievements (Melucci 1984; Castells 1997b). This may involve direct demands for material improvements to urban life or transformations to the political system, but also

encompasses the promotion of alternative ideas about collective identity, democracy and, importantly, urban space.

In the wake of the student and worker uprisings of the late 1960s, there was a prolonged period of intense protest across Italy cities. Urban problems which had been accentuated by the economic boom, such as the lack of affordable, decent housing and basic social services, became a focus of mobilization (Marcelloni 1979). Although traditional forms and issues of protest (for instance labour issues) continued to dominate during the 1970s, struggles also turned to explicitly city-related issues such as housing, the environment and welfare. Protest groups were often socially diverse and increasingly locality – rather than workplace – based. Nevertheless, as Lumley argues, these 'new social movements' could only "struggle into existence" by drawing on existing political and ideoelogical traditions: "the worker and student movements provided the models which other movements attempted to replicate, revise or break away from" (Lumley 1990: 273). Naples, which lacked a tradition of collective action, became, like other large cities, a hotbed of protests. After the cholera epidemic of 1973, various '*comitati di quartiere*' (neighbourhood committees), consisting of new left groups and local residents, were formed in the poor neighbourhoods of the *centro storico* to demand clean water and acceptable sanitary conditions as well as to push for grass-roots participation in decision making (Marcelloni 1979; Ginsborg 1990). Out of these experiences emerged the *Movimento dei Disoccupati Organizzati* (MDO; Movement of the Organized Unemployed), the first movement of its kind anywhere in the western world, which struggled for the provision of regular jobs on the basis of need and commitment to struggle rather than along political or clientilistic lines. The main streets and piazzas and public buildings in the *centro storico* became the terrain of continual direct action, as one of their activists explained:

> "As we can't strike or close a factory, for the moment the streets are our factory, and as the workers stop production, so we stop the traffic." (Ginsborg 1990: 365)

Collective action was not only concerned with material issues, but also (and often contemporaneously) pursued more immeasurable goals, such as practising direct democracy, establishing group autonomy and solidarity, and elaborating alternative cultural codes and languages; issues which had been excluded from traditional

organziations such as political parties and trade unions (Melucci 1984: Lumley 1990). The cultivation of different lifestyles and cultural identities often involved the search for alternative (public) spaces. For instance, young people occupied empty buildings in the heart of cities not only to meet immediate material needs but as a means of creating autonomous spheres through which to pursue political and cultural agendas.

Although the radical upheavals of the 1970s would dissipate during the following decade, largely due to the institutional co-optation of groups and a growing disillusionment with collective action which coincided with the so-called '*riflusso*' (the mass retreat into private life) (Ginsborg 1990; Lumley 1990), urban protests did not suddenly disappear or become redundant[22]. While 'traditional' industrial struggles would become increasingly defensive as they sought to counteract the consequences of de-industrialization and the organized unemployed groups would proceed in their battle for jobs albeit factionalized and, in some cases, capitulating to clientilism (Cerase et al. 1991), new concerns arose such as the protection of buildings and urban spaces threatened by redevelopment programmes. These often drew on previous political traditions and involved former militants while at the same time formulated new forms of direct action or "media event creation" (Castells 1997b) to amplify the public impact of their campaigns. The emergence of the *centri sociali* as a nationwide phenomena during the early 1990s reflected most acutely the series of breaks and continuities with the past. Ideological and political traditions were reworked within new contexts, while new modes of cultural production (such as rap music) were experimented and alternative ideas about the 'post-industrial' city were promoted through the self-management of (occupied) urban spaces. DAMM, which refuted the 'traditional' political positions of other *centri sociali*, constructed an alternative urban project around the reutilization of an abandoned park planned as part of the post-earthquake reconstruction programme. Even though it was not born in direct opposition to Bassolino, it would elaborate oppositionary ideas about the city in the context of regeneration; drawing upon and higlighting the contradictions of the administration's urban policies. The reimaging of the *centro storico* under Bassolino would also transform certain 'new' spaces, in particular the pedestrianized Piazza Plebiscito, into places of protest over 'old' problems such as unemployment and housing which had remained largely unchanged as well as

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[22] In Naples, following the 1980 earthquake there was actually an upsurge in protests over housing and jobs, although these were oriented towards immediate goals and often took more desperate forms of action such as the occupation of schools.

emergent issues such as immigrant rights. The case studies will therefore explore how the city was both the *site* and *object* of organized action and how the various experiments and protests related with the collective experiences of the past.

The idea of 'contested space' also addresses the multiple and sometimes conflicting relationships between different people and space. The *centro storico* during the 1990s became an increasingly heterogeneous place where new users and residents, such as immigrants and tourists, laid different claims to space. The transformation of certain public spaces, for instance the pedestrianization of streets and piazzas, also gave rise to diverse 'unintended' functions. The Italian urban anthropologist, Amalia Signorelli, who has worked extensively in and around Naples, provides a stimulating and locally sensitive approach to interpreting the array of interactions between individuals and groups and urban space. Signorelli argues that space can be considered a resource which different social actors seek to use in a variety of ways.

> "Like every other resource, space is therefore subject to power relations and the controls governing its use will be decisive in turning it into an instrument of subordination or liberation, of differentiation or equality." (Signorelli 1996: 59).

She sees three basic processes as constituting people's socio-cultural relationship with urban space: *assegnazione* (ascription), *appropriazione* (appropriation) and *appaesemento* (symbolization)[23]. Her conceptual-methodological framework is not dissimilar to Lefebvre's spatial triad. *Assegnazione* refers to spaces assigned to a subject as a result of history, birth, social position, or through urban transformations planned from above. *Appropriazione* denotes the adapted uses of space which satisfy needs and desires and tend to improve the relationship between people and places. Definitions of needs are expressed through different languages and practices. Angela Giglia (1997), a former student of Signorelli, has examined how the social spaces of a new council housing project built after the 1983 bradisismic earthquake in Pozzuoli (to the immediate west of Naples) were reorganized by its residents. The various unintended (although not entirely unforeseen) appropriations of the planned "abstract" space (Signorelli 1996: 66) were structured around gender relations. Hence, while the open patches of land and road junctions transformed respectively into football pitches and

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[23] This material derives from the annual series of joint urban anthropology-town planning seminars held in the Sociology Department, Naples University attended in 1999 and 2000. See also Signorelli 1996: 57-66.

meeting places were used predominantly by males, the principal spaces of interaction for many women were created on landings inside the tower blocks or immediately outside the buildings. Finally, *appaesemento* refers to the meanings conferred to a space which serve for individuals and groups to make sense of place. Even those so-called "non-places" (Augé 1995) considered to be devoid of any 'identity' are invested with meaning by its users. Giglia examines how the same housing project was 'symbolized' with self-constructed shrines and decorative adjustments to the interiors and exteriors of buildings. Therefore a space, which was considered by outside observers to be lacking in any aesthetic or human value, became for some (but not all) residents the subject of positive feelings and a sense of belonging (Giglia 1997: 199). This anthropological approach can be also employed to examine the public spaces in the *centro storico* of Naples. For example, the pedestrianized Piazza Plebiscito was appropriated by users as, *inter alia*, a giant playground and a place for the unlicensed vending of refreshments. Architectural features not only assumed new functions (such as the equestrian statues which were used for goalposts) but became symbols which mapped out alternative ideas about the piazza.

Signorelli points out that there are various limits (legal, cultural, environmental and so on) which condition the processes of appropriation and symbolization. These are not just imposed from above but are also constructed and enforced from below. It is when these limits are crossed or exposed that one can talk in terms of 'spatial transgression'. Transgression can be understood as the trespass across framed boundaries. People and things only transgress if they are conceived to be in the 'wrong place': if there is no 'wrong place', then there is no transgression (Cresswell 1997). In contrast to politically significant forms of collective action, spatial transgression is seemingly ephemeral and inconsequential. It is often either ignored or labelled as deviant. But it is through the contradiction or invertion of urban codes, values and norms that 'disobedient' spatial practices may tell us something about the ordering of the city. According to the British geographer, Alastair Bonnett, the city is "alive with errant geographical manoeuvres" (Bonnett 1998: 35). This he exemplifies by describing two observed cases of routine spatial transgression: young jaywalkers who perform provocative pirouettes on an inner-city motorway and elderly women who visit their friends working at the tills in Tescos and bring their own food into the store. Bonnett stresses that these acts of spatial contestation are politically contradictory. Their radical potential – the boys' refusal of

alienating planning and the women's rejection of the supermarket as solely a place of consumption – is at the same time structured and enabled by "conservative identities":

> "The lads running across the traffic and the elderly women in the supermarket are both disobeying on terrains in which they feel comfortable..The refusal of Tesco's spatial discipline is carried out by these women both as something spontaneous and challenging and as something that accepts and accommodates itself to the limitations placed on women's spatial activities." (ibid.: 29)

Transgression must not be considered as *a priori* progressive. The carnivalesque, as Whyte and Stallybrass argue, momentarily overturns notions of power but at the same time "violently abuses and demonizes weaker, not stronger, social groups – women, ethnic and religious minorities, those who 'don't belong' in a process of *displaced abjection*" (Stallybrass and White 1986: 18). Transgression may be effective in the way it reveals "topographies of power" (Cresswell 1996: 176) but disruptions and deconstructions of urban hegemony do not in themselves lead to social transformations. Bonnett laconically points out that the 'till talkers' were eventually moved along after the store manager was changed.

Bonnett's discussion also raises another problematic. The process of identifying spatial practices needs to be foregrounded so as to avoid reifying transgression into 'counter spaces'. What the observer describes as transgressive is not necessarily perceived as such by the agents involved. Moreover, what is deemed aberrant in one locality may not be so in another.

This needs to be especially considered in the case of Naples. The city has been regularly dubbed by outsiders as "the capital of transgression" on account of an apparent diffuse disregard for rules and public order[24]. This persistent (Eurocentric?) image of a timelessly recalcitrant Naples often makes no attempt to situate practices within local frames of meaning or to account for the shifting boundaries between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour; boundaries which have been accentuated and repositioned during the 1990s. For instance, the selling of contraband cigarettes is locally regarded by some as a vital and acceptable source of income, by others as an illegal act controlled by the Camorra. While this might take place openly in certain areas and at certain times,

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[24] This accolade was most recently endowed on the city in Spring 2001 by the RAI current affairs television programme "*L'Elmo di Scipio*" in reference to many Neapolitan motorcyclists' refusal to wear crash helmets.

the conspicuous presence of the *contrabbandiere* in the 'reclaimed' spaces of the *centro storico* would lead to public outrage (although this rarely occurs because the vendor assumes more covert and mobile selling methods).

Collective political action, the various appropriations and symbolizations of space, and instances of spatial transgression together constitute the contested spaces of Piazza Plebiscito, Piazza Garibaldi and DAMM. Through the examination of these three interlinking issues, it is also possible to analyse the impact of controls and boundaries which are constructed around spaces during regeneration and, in doing so, interrogate the official discourses about a new socially inclusive city.

3.3 The piazza: public space and metaphor

Two of the spaces studied are, nominally at least, 'piazzas'. As with previous concepts, the idea of piazza needs to be considered in the context of Naples. The piazza is an emblematic feature of the Italian city and an ultimate metonym for public space. As a particular spatial form it represents a 'node' on a network of routes, a 'pause' in built space, or an 'organized void' (Isnenghi 1994: 4). This space is either the result of a single architectural project, for example Piazza San Pietro in Rome, or is, more usually, the outcome of a gradual accumulation of buildings, signs, monuments and spatial modifications over time, as in the case of Piazza San Marco in Venice (Aymonino in Locatelli 1989: 52).

As an area of social interaction, the piazza has traditionally been perceived as the quintessential "theatre of public life" (Burke 1986: 10); a place of assemblies, proclamations, rituals, exchanges and conflicts. It has also stood as a metaphor for citizenship and the physical embodiment of the public sphere (Berman 1986). The civic piazzas of Medieval and Renaissance city states, descendants of the Greek polis and Roman forum, were places of political engagement, education and participation in public life (Amin 2000). But they were also the spaces where power was wielded and displayed, and where controls were exerted. For instance, patricians in seventeeth century Venice would take over Piazza San Marco between five and eight in the evening to conduct their public affairs while keeping commoners at bay (Burke 1986: 8). As a space of dominion, the piazza was therefore also a focus of challenges to power. Norberto Bobbio has pointed to the effect the political status of the piazza in public life has had on the Italian language. While it bears explicit democratic, populist and authoritarian connotations, as in the examples "to resort to the piazza" (to search the consensus of the people) or "to place in the piazza" (to put into the public eye), equivalent expressions in English, French and German use the words '*street*', '*rue*' and '*strasse*' (Dardi 1992: 54)[25].

Mario Isnenghi (1994) identifies three different basic types of historical piazza: the religious space where processions and festivals were enacted, the political piazza where

governing institutions were located and the market place where commercial exchange was carried out. Although these corresponded to precise locations in the city – *Piazza Duomo*, *Piazza Castello* and *Piazza Mercato* – their functions overlapped. Hence the central piazza of the independent city state which represented the physical and symbolic heart of political and religious authority may also have served as a market place on certain days of the week. The construction of any universal typology of piazzas raises a number of practical problems. Firstly it implies a set of spatial criteria which distinguishes the piazza from open, shapeless spaces without any prevalent use. These are typically defined as '*spiazzi*' or '*larghi*' (Guidoni 1989), despite the fact that 'piazza' may be their official toponym and that they may be perceived as such by social groups. Secondly, there exists a complex hierarchy which ranks the piazza in terms of its functional and symbolic properties and its location within the city (Aymard 1999: 140). At the top of this hierarchy resides the central piazza or a series of spaces which share a city's spatial supremacy, while towards the bottom one would find the smaller and peripheral spaces which might not immediately possess any of Isnenghi's three elements and may appear little more than empty pockets in built space or intersections at the confluence of streets. The positioning within this hierarchy is never fixed over time and may fluctuate depending on social, cultural and political circumstances. Thirdly, there also exists a sort of geographical discrimination which has traditionally excluded the piazzas of southern Italy from national accounts. They barely feature in Isnenghi's historical monograph of Italian piazzas, while some writers specifically equate the piazza with the public spaces of central Italian cities (Aymard 1999: 140). This can be partly explained by an actual absence of iconic historic piazzas of the status of Piazza del Campo in Siena or Piazza San Marco in Venice, but also reflects the traditional image of the South as lacking both civic space and a rich urban culture[26].

Although numerous guide books use Neapolitan piazzas to talk about the city (Delli 1994; Ruggiero 1996), Naples has been generally thought to lack 'civic' piazzas (Capasso 1993). The Neapolitan case is useful because it problematizes the rigid typology based on Northern and Central Italian cities. Naples certainly does not possess

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[25] The word 'piazza' first came into use around 1250. Its etymology is actually not connected with the public spaces of Roman and Greek antiquity (the forum and polis) but has its origins in the Latin and Greek adjectives 'platea' and 'plateía', meaning 'wide' or 'broad' (De Mauro and Mancini 2000).

[26] The state funded *Agorà* project at the end of the 1980s set out to resolve this inbalance by analysing and documenting 168 piazzas across the *Mezzogiorno*, at the same time as drawing up proposals for their conservation and protection (Barbiani 1992).

a central emblematic piazza characteristic of other cities such as Piazza Duomo in Milan or Piazza Maggiore in Bologna. The city peculiarly possesses no Piazza Duomo although there are countless spaces which owe their existence and names to adjacent churches. While there existed a Largo Castello (present-day Piazza Municipio), there also existed nearby Largo di Palazzo (Piazza Plebiscito), yet significantly neither of these were originally called 'piazzas'. Indeed in certain cases, the word 'piazza' was imported after the Unification of Italy. Before 1860, the term 'largo' (or '*larìo*' in Neapolitan dialect), meaning 'open space', was more commonly used. This did not carry the array of connotations of the piazza. It was this apparent absence of architectural types and languages which acted to further marginalize the city from the cultural foundations of the new Italian state.

> "Nineteenth-century Italy sought the roots of a possible national identity in the history of the medieval city states and the Renaissance, with its art, its great men and the Italian (Tuscan) language. Naturally, the South was excluded from this history and the models to which it appealed. The classical ideal expressed by the Florence of the Medici constituted a positive ideal for the nation and one which every community in Italy had to measure up to." (Gribaudi 1997: 85)

However there did exist a Piazza Mercato (which had always been called by this name) located on the south east corner of the *centro storico*. This was a space of intense commercial exchange and very much the symbolic heart of popular Naples. It also historically possessed a religious component (represented by the church of Santa Maria di Carmine which was, and still is, the focus of an annual festival) and a political component (in the form of the government tax office). These elements were all present in the famous uprising of Masaniello in 1647: the mock-battle enacted during a feast of the Virgin Mary became the pretext for market traders and local poor to burn down the government building in revolt over rising bread prices (Burke 1986).

The case of Naples therefore presents similarities and differences to Isnenghi's typology but at the same time encourages a rethinking of a more flexible and multivarious idea of 'piazza'. The *centro storico* possesses a range of open places which serve different functions and reflect various stages in the city's development [**map 1.v.**]. The numerous piazzas in the *centro antico* are mostly little more than tiny cleavages in the dense urban fabric. The vast majority are dominated by one or more churches and are characterized by a rich mix of historical periods, from the Graeco-Roman foundations which are often visible at the base of buildings through to the baroque churches and *palazzi* of the

seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Some of the piazzas in the the surrounding *quartieri* are similar in appearance to those in the *centro antico* but belong to a more historically recent era, while others in the same area are either crossroads or open spaces that were never built on. Similarly, some of the busiest piazzas in between the *quartieri* and the *centro antico* are little more than large road junctions (Piazza Trieste and Trento, Piazza VII Settembre) or wide streets (Piazza Museo). Although Naples does not possess the grand planned Baroque piazzas of Rome or Turin, some of the city's larger piazzas are partially or entirely the result of urban projects. Under the Bourbons during the late eighteenth century, neoclassical semicircular 'forums' were built to impose order onto three of the city's principal open areas (present-day Piazzas Plebiscito, Mercato and Dante). The new building of the *Risanamento* contributed a series of airy but sombre piazzas (Nicola Amore, Bovio and Garibaldi) which stood in stark contrast to the tiny spaces of the cleared slums. The demolition of the ramparts of the Maschio Angioino during the early twentieth century led to the present-day layout of Piazza Municipio[27], while the fascist administrative district of Rione Carità gave the *centro storico* its last major piazza: the imposing Piazza Matteotti. All of these piazzas, with the exception of Piazza Mercato, have functioned as important nodes in the city's transport system. While such piazzas came to be associated with their particular traffic function, others were often characterized by their dominant social make-up. The piazzas in the *centro antico* and the *quartieri* have been considered 'popular' spaces in terms of the activities carried out, from hawking to religious parades, and the local groups which frequent them. Meanwhile, a select number of piazzas in the more affluent areas have been traditionally dubbed '*salotti*' (exclusive meeting places), in particular Piazza dei Martiri in Chiaia and Piazza Vanvitelli in the nineteenth-century heart of Vomero. These were the 'islands' of upper-class and bourgeois urban life and café society. This swift summary demonstrates that by avoiding ideal historical types, a more multiform image of the piazza emerges. Furthermore, not all of the above spaces are peculiar to Naples but are commonly present in northern cities.

It is frequently argued that with the advent of the modern city, the piazza's role as a centre of urban and civic life began to decline (Isnenghi 1994; Nuvolari 1989). Its

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[27] The construction of the ferry terminal in the 1930s on reclaimed land to the immediate south of Piazza Municipio turned it into the nearest the city has had to a 'port piazza'. However, this open space, the Molo Beverello, has never officially been part of the piazza and until 1999 was divided from the rest of the city by a two-metre-high wall.

ideological properties were re-evoked and re-worked at certain historical moments, for instance during Unification and under Fascism, while it would remain the focus of political protests and mass demonstrations. However, with industrialization and the rapid expansion of cities, the street rapidly acquired a more central position in urban design and thought. The connotations of movement, progress and modernity associated with the street sharply contrasted to closed confines of the historical piazza (Portoghesi in Locatelli 1989: 38). Therefore, while De Chirico paid homage to the timeless quality of the piazza in his metaphysical paintings, its very sedateness was hated by the Futurists as a symbol of small-town life[28]. In Naples, the late nineteenth-century *Risanamento* provided the city with new piazzas but these essentially served as decorative accoutrements and traffic junctions for the programme's principal intervention, the new boulevard which linked the railway station with the commercial and administrative heart of the city. During the same period, a 'covered' piazza in the form of the Galleria Umberto I was constructed in front of the city's opera house. As in other major Italian cities, the concept of the piazza as a site of face-to-face interaction was transplanted into a shopping arcade: the new bourgeois monument to consumption.

During the course of the twentieth century the civic role of the piazza in cities is said to have diminished further or disappeared altogether (Isnenghi 1994; Amin 2000). Forms of entertainment which previously centred on the piazza – the travelling fairs and musicians – gave way to an emergent leisure industry of dance halls and cinemas. New technologies such as radio, television and the internet led to the rise of surrogate 'electronic' or 'cyber' piazzas which no longer demanded a physical public space (Mitchell 1995). The boom in road traffic had perhaps the greatest impact of all, turning many piazzas into car parks or new transport routes. The adverse consequences of traffic on the city's public spaces had already been recognized by Camille Sitte at the end of the nineteenth century (Isnenghi 1994: 8). Mobility has usually been perceived as inimical to citizenship and civility which was seen to be *located* in fixed places (Sheller and Urry 2000: 740). Theorists of the city and the public sphere have conceived the car as "a fiendish interloper that destroyed earlier patterns of urban life" (ibid.: 738), as Habermas argues:

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[28] In his manifesto of 1913 "The Death of Syntax. Imagination without Strings – Words in Freedom", Filippo Tommaso Marinetti declared: "An ordinary man can in a day's time travel from a little dead town of empty squares..to a great capital city bristling with lights, gestures and street cries" (Fisdall and Bozzolla 1977: 8).

"[The] meaningful ordering of the city as a whole..has been overtaken, to mention just one factor, by changes in the function of streets and squares due to the technical requirements of traffic flow. The resulting configuration does not afford a spatially protected private sphere, nor does it create free space for public contacts and communications that could bring private people together to form a public" (quoted in Sheller and Urry 2000: 742)

This drawn-out eulogy to the piazza would appear premature in the case of Naples. The car has certainly had an impact on the city's public life, as shall be examined in the study of the transformation of Piazza Plebiscito into a bus terminal and car park. However, certain changes that are construed as signs of the piazza's demise elsewhere in Italy – for instance the replacement of market stalls by the supermarket (Isnenghi 1994) – have not occurred in the *centro storico* of Naples.

In the last two decades and in what appears to be a turnaround in fortunes, the piazza has become a leitmotif in European programmes of urban regeneration. The revaluing of the piazza through its pedestrianization, redesign and restoration has been seen as a means of retrieving a sense of civic identity and collective memory, of recuperating monumental and people-friendly spaces and of linking up detached parts of the city (Nuvolari 1989; Locatelli 1989). The focus on piazzas became a favoured approach to urban renewal: it was relatively cheap to transform, it bore immediate results and it connected with the growing political emphasis on citizenship (Amin 2000). In Naples the reclamation of the piazza was initially a means of clawing back 'urban identity' from the grip of traffic, illegal activities and pollution. At the beginning of the 1990s, environmental and heritage groups successfully campaigned to get rid of a car park in Piazza Bellini, located on the western edge of the *centro antico*, which was subsequently transformed into a symbol of an enlightened public's fight against the city's neglect. This would be followed by the retrieval of other small piazzas in the heart of the city. Therefore, prior to the election of Bassolino and the facelift of Piazza Plebiscito in 1994, the piazza was already considered a key element to urban renewal.

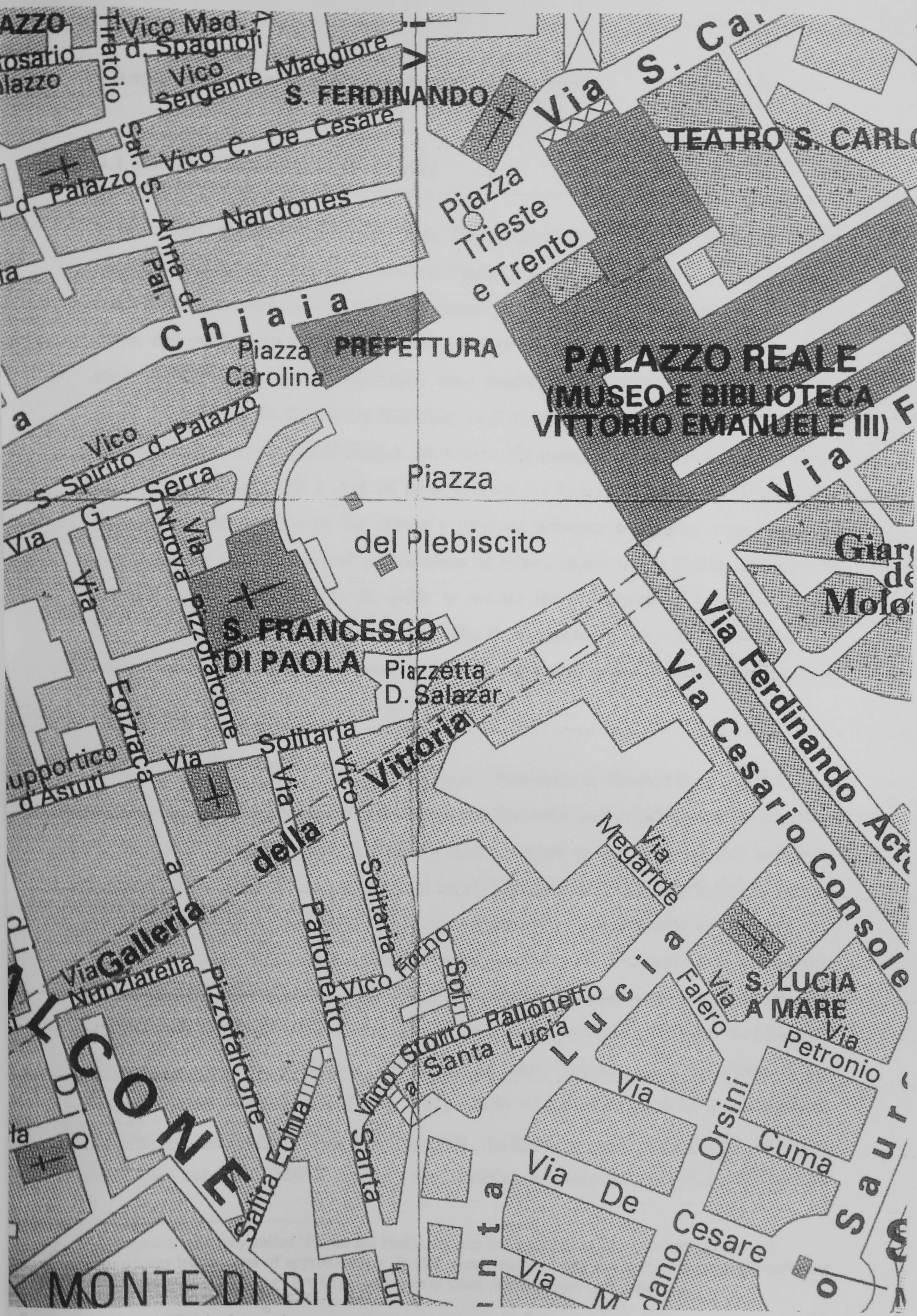
However, the regeneration of piazzas is not such a straightforward process. The piazza finds itself in a contradictory position in the contemporary city:

"If you do not exclude [cars] from historic piazzas these are reduced to foul-smelling, glistening car parks. If you remove them, you risk cutting piazzas off from the present, of embalming and reducing them to a simulacra of what they once were but where life has since dispersed." (Isnenghi 1994: 8)

Although (auto)mobility has been perceived as the enemy of a place-bound civility, the right to movement has also been a basic objective of urban democracies. As much as it might be a cause for despair, car ownership has reshaped citizenship and the public sphere (Sheller and Urry 2000: 742). The conflicts surrounding the eviction of traffic and the subsequent invention of a cultural sense of place would be central issues to the transformation of Piazza Plebiscito.

PART 2: PIAZZA PLEBISCITO: THE CULTURAL REIMAGING OF PLACE AS A CONTESTED PROCESS

2.1. Aerial view of Piazza Plebiscito



2.i. Piazza Plebiscito and surrounding area. Scale: 4cm = 100m

Chapter 4: From Royal Courtyard to Car Park

4.1 The historical role of the piazza

In her 2001 election manifesto, Rosa Russo Iervolino, the centre-left's successful mayoral candidate for Naples, described Piazza Plebiscito[1] the "world's most beautiful piazza" (Napoli con Iervolino 2001). Restored and closed to traffic for the G7 summit in 1994, this piazza has been promoted as the jewel in the crown of the city's urban renewal. Such superlatives would have been totally misplaced only a few years before. Until the early 1990s the piazza had been used as an enormous car park and had long been peripheral to images of Naples. Moreover, for many architectural historians it had always been considered a sort of poor relation to Rome's Piazza San Pietro. The dramatic transformation in the piazza's fortunes presents a singular case study for examining the reworkings and redefinitions of public space, urban history and cultural heritage during regeneration. In order to situate the narratives of the 'new Piazza Plebiscito', this first chapter reconstructs the multi-layered history of the 'old piazza', from its distant royal past to the car-dominated space of post-war decades, and examines its position within representations of the city.

One of the largest piazzas in Naples[2], Piazza Plebiscito is situated between the city's main commercial and administrative district to the north east and the *quartieri popolari* of the Pallonetto to the west, and the Spanish Quarters to the north [**fig 2.1 and map 2.i.**]. It is enclosed by four architectural units. The Palazzo Reale (1600-1602), located on the eastern side, presently houses a museum, the Superintendency for Art and Architecture and the National Library. Facing each other on the northern and southern sides of the piazza are two early nineteenth century palaces with identical façades: Palazzo della Prefettura, the seat of the prefect for the province of Naples, and Palazzo Salerno, the southern headquarters of the Italian army. Opposite the Royal Palace is the church of San Francesco di Paola (1817-1836) which is centred in a semicircular neoclassical colonnade. This building was traditionally used exclusively for state cerimonies but since 1990 it has been the worshipping place for a small parish. In front

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[1] The space is officially called 'Piazza *del* Plebiscito' but is referred to at all levels without the 'del'.
[2] The piazza has an area of approximately 26,000 square metres. Only Piazza Garibaldi (66,000m²) and Piazza Municipio (32,000m²) are larger and both of these remain major road junctions.

of the colonnade are located two equestrian statues depicting the Bourbon kings, Ferdinando I and Carlo III. These are the only permanent objects in the piazza.

An open space known as Borgo Santo Spirito had existed on the same spot as Piazza Plebiscito since the thirteenth century. The term *borgo* denoted its location outside the city walls, while Santo Spirito referred to one of four surrounding ecclesiastical buildings which were all demolished as the present piazza took shape. With the completion of the Royal Palace in 1602, the name of the space was changed to Largo di Palazzo. As the symbolic and physical centre of monarchical power, Largo di Palazzo provided the stage for royal pageants, weddings and funerals, papal visits and, above all, military parades [**fig. 2.2.**]. It was also the setting for annual rituals and festivals which directly involved the lower ranks of Neapolitan society and which essentially served to reassert authority. One such event was the assault of the '*Cuccagna*', the central feature of carnival under the Bourbons during the second half of the eighteenth century. This consisted of a mountainous fabrication of wood, papier mâché and cloth lavishly covered with assorted items of food. Its presence in the middle of the piazza represented "a utopian symbol of the Kingdom's abundance and happiness" (Barletta 1997: 100). On each Sunday during February, as the King and his entourage watched from the balcony of the Palazzo Reale, the *Cuccagna's* Royal Guards would withdraw from their posts leaving the (male) masses to scale the structure and plunder its booty. Despite outbreaks of grievous violence and lawlessness as competing neighbourhoods fought each other to hoard the most spoils, the significance of the event was never placed in question. Any appearance of conflict was subsumed within the spectacle: participation in the brawls and scuffles was an implicit acceptance of one's subordinate social position and was considered a sign of allegiance to the Bourbon regime (ibid.).

The piazza was nevertheless a focus for challenges to royal authority. The liberal intelligentsia, which had campaigned for the abolition of the *Cuccagna* as a manifestation of the Bourbon regime's backwardness, later exploited the political significance of the space during the 1799 revolution. The Declaration of the Republic was read to a crowd of Neapolitans and French troops from the balcony of the renamed Palazzo Nazionale. A liberty tree, emblem of the revolution, was then raised in the middle of the piazza and during the following weeks others appeared in public places across the city. With the restoration of the monarchy six months later, these symbols

were immediately eradicated and stone crosses were erected on their sites as signs of the return to order. One of the few images of the tumultuous events of 1799 depicts a counter-revoltionary mob of British soldiers and *sanfedisti* as they destroy the tree in Largo di Palazzo [**fig. 2.3.**]. The following decade during the Napoleonic occupation, Gioacchino Murat, the city's governor, planned to transform Largo di Palazzo into a lay and bourgeois piazza through the construction of a neoclassical civic forum in front of the Palazzo Reale. Work was cut short with the return to the throne in 1815 of Ferdinando IV who immediately commissioned, as an ex-voto, a basilica in honour of San Francesco di Paola which replaced the original design of the assembly rooms at the centre of the colonnade. This building, which re-established the alliance between catholicism and the monarchy (Murat had demolished the remaining churches), has been described as Europe's principle monument to the Restoration (Villari 1995: 137)[3]. However, the fact that the colonnade was kept in the final design reflected the King's pragmatic approach to the legacy of the French occupation which sharply contrasted to the indiscriminate, bloody vendetta of 1799 (Petrusewicz 1998). Certainly, the new spatial layout gave the piazza a more sombre aspect. Popular festivities and carnivals were abolished or relocated to other, less formal parts of the city (Nuvolari 1989b: 31), while the military, royal and papal ceremonies became predominant. Following the insurrections of 1830 and 1848, travelling musicians were banned from the piazza and the surrounding area. Such free spirited individuals – who according to Isnenghi constituted the democratic facet of piazzas (Isnenghi 1994: 12) – were considered a threat by the Bourbon police because they were easily influenced by revolutionary ideals (Genoino 1989: 71).

Largo di Palazzo was re-baptized Piazza del Plebiscito after the fall of the Bourbon monarchy in commemoration of the plebiscite of 21st October 1860 which formally sanctioned the south's incorporation into the Italian Kingdom[4]. The result was announced from the piazza itself, although the fact that this has since been universally referred to as 'Piazza Plebiscito' (without the 'del') has diminished the spatial link with the actual event. After 1860, the piazza's political significance decreased as real power

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[3] A parallel can be drawn with the construction at the end of the nineteenth century of the Basilica of Sacré Coeur in Montmartre which reinforced clerical authority in the wake of the Paris Commune of 1871 and sought to eradicate the neighbourhood's close connection with the uprising (Harvey 1989a).

switched to the new Italian capitals in the north and local decision making shifted to the council chambers in nearby Piazza Municipio. Besides the new title, no real attempt was made to eradicate the vestiges of the Bourbon regime as these posed no threat to the new state. During the fervour of Unification, the equestrian statues of Ferdinando I and Carlo III[5] risked destruction at the hands of an angry mob. A Garibaldian priest reputedly intervened to calm the situation and reassured the crowds that the heads would be replaced with those of Garibaldi and Vittorio Emanuele but this proposal died as anti-Bourbon resentment withered (Gleijeses 1968)[6]. The main monuments to the new nation were raised elsewhere, such as the giant statue of Vittorio Emanuele on horseback which was erected, significantly, in front of the city hall in Piazza Municipio.

Nevertheless, the piazza remained a symbol of power. The army set up its headquarters in Palazzo Salerno, the former home of a Bourbon prince, while the prefecture, the national government's representative in the city, occupied the Palazzo della Foresteria. The Palazzo Reale became a Savoy residence, and although it was assigned over to the state as a national monument in 1919, the Royal Family continued to occupy a wing of the building up until 1946. Given its size and design, the piazza also remained the city's principal ceremonial space and provided the setting for opera concerts, military parades and the occasional royal wedding. With the *Risanamento*, a fountain was built in the middle of Piazza Plebiscito to celebrate the opening of the Serino aqueduct which brought fresh water into the city. The piazza was therefore deployed to project the image of sanatized city in the wake of the cholera epidemic [**fig. 2.4a.**]. The explicit political function of Piazza Plebiscito was resurrected during the Fascist *ventennio* with mass rallies and propaganda stunts such as the Battle for Grain [**fig. 2.4b.**]. However, this was not a reappropriation of Piazza Plebiscito per sé, but rather one example of a national strategy to colonize public space and, in particular, exploit the populist function of piazzas (Isnenghi 1994; Atkinson 1998). Unlike the fascist *podestà*, the city mayor

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[4] Much controversy surrounds the legitimacy of the plebiscite which was categorical: 1,312,376 votes in favour and 10,312 against unification. Voters were intimidated by the police and *camorristi* to support the plebiscite, while some results, especially in the provinces, were rigged (Macry 1999).

[5] The two statues, which were finally completed in 1839, were originally commissioned during the French occupation and one of the horses was supposed to carry Napoleon but, as with the forum, work was modified following the restoration of the monarchy.

[6] In 1888, Umberto I commissioned a series of statues depicting the representatives of the city's various ruling dynasties which were mounted in niches along the Royal Palace's façade. The fact that this lineage culminated in the figure of the first Italian monarch, Vittorio Emanuele, suggested a direct line of continuity (Arcidiacono 1999: 24).

and the local administrative apparatus were neither powerful enough nor politically visible enough to leave an ideological imprint on such a space. Only the monarchist Achille Lauro succeeded in reshaping a piazza in his image. Significantly, the space in question was Piazza Municipio and its facelift in 1956, which involved the chopping down of rows of 120 year-old holm-oaks to enhance the physical presence of the city hall, was carried out illegally at night in total disregard of the council and public opinion.

After the Second World War, Piazza Plebiscito's size and setting were exploited by the city's main political parties as a venue for giant election rallies. Such events, which attracted crowds of up to 100,000 people, represented impressive propaganda victories. However, following the massive *comizi* of the PCI, DC and Monarchist leaders in the early 1950s and apart from the odd occasion, for instance Communist leader Enrico Berlinguer's visit to Naples in 1976, these rallies became less spectacular and the stage was gradually brought closer to the Royal Palace to conceal the dwindling crowds (Corsi 1994). A depleted audience was as politically damaging as a full piazza was uplifting. By the 1980s, parties switched the majority of their campaigning to smaller and more tactically viable places. Piazza Plebiscito was also a regular place for demonstrations but this was chiefly due to the presence of the prefecture. Protests were confined to single issues in which the prefect played an arbitrating role, as in the case of striking taxi drivers in 1950 [**fig. 2.5a.**]. Political marches, unless they were particularly large and required a suitably sized arena, would begin and end in other locations of the city.

Although no longer a setting for carnivals, the piazza was incorporated into the itinerary of a number of popular processions. Until its demise in 1953, the annual parade of the Nzegna, a costume re-enactment of the rapport between the Bourbons and the *popolino* organized by locals from the Pallonetto and Santa Lucia neighbourhoods, would cross Piazza Plebiscito in front of the Royal Palace as it wound its way down through alleyways towards the sea (Broccolini 1998). This route, together with the ritualized reversal of roles and participants' mocking disregard for authority, created a spatial symbiosis between the poor, dark, cramped neighbourhood of the Pallonetto, physically screened behind the buildings surrounding San Francesco di Paola, and the open, palatial setting of Piazza Plebiscito. Another example was the Piedigrotta music festival,

which in its heyday from the late nineteenth century to the 1950s was considered the epitome of popular Neapolitan culture. Most years the cavalcade of decorated floats would cross Piazza Plebiscito, while grandstands for paying spectators were occasionally mounted by the colonnade where songs were performed in front of a jury. However, the piazza was chosen primarily for its functional advantages. There were no songs about the location as there were about other urban landmarks such as the Monastery of Santa Chiara or the fishing village of Marechiaro, and its image never featured on the event's posters or programmes (Mancini and Gargano 1991).

Despite these occasional roles, it seems that Piazza Plebiscito was a peripheral place in the everyday collective experience of the city. Organized events would sometimes pull gigantic crowds but otherwise there was little in the piazza to attract people. Caffè Gambrinus, one of two literary cafés located on its corners (the other being Gran Caffè Turco which closed in 1932), was for many years an exclusive microcosm of the bourgeois public sphere. After it reopened its doors in 1890 following the cholera epidemic, it became the haunt of the Neapolitan intelligentsia and cultural elite including Gabriele D'Annunzio. Considered a threat to the Fascist regime's hegemony, it was shut down in 1936 on order of the neighbouring prefect[7]. However, apart from the fact that it was, and still is, a socially exclusive meeting place, Gambrinus was more closely bound to the much smaller and busier Piazza Trieste and Trento adjacent to Piazza Plebiscito[8]. Instead, the buildings facing Piazza Plebiscito were either officially off-limits (as in the case of Palazzo Salerno), had entry restrictions (the prefecture and the Royal Palace) or were rarely open to the public (San Francesco di Paola). The colonnade, which housed a number of artisans' workshops was the only space that encouraged interaction. As one of the few public places in Naples to offer shelter from the elements, it was commonly associated with the city's more destitute inhabitants. There existed a traditional saying "You'll end up living under the colonnades of San Francesco di Paola" which was a warning to those who wasted their time and squandered their money. The colonnade's function as a public dormitory was mentioned

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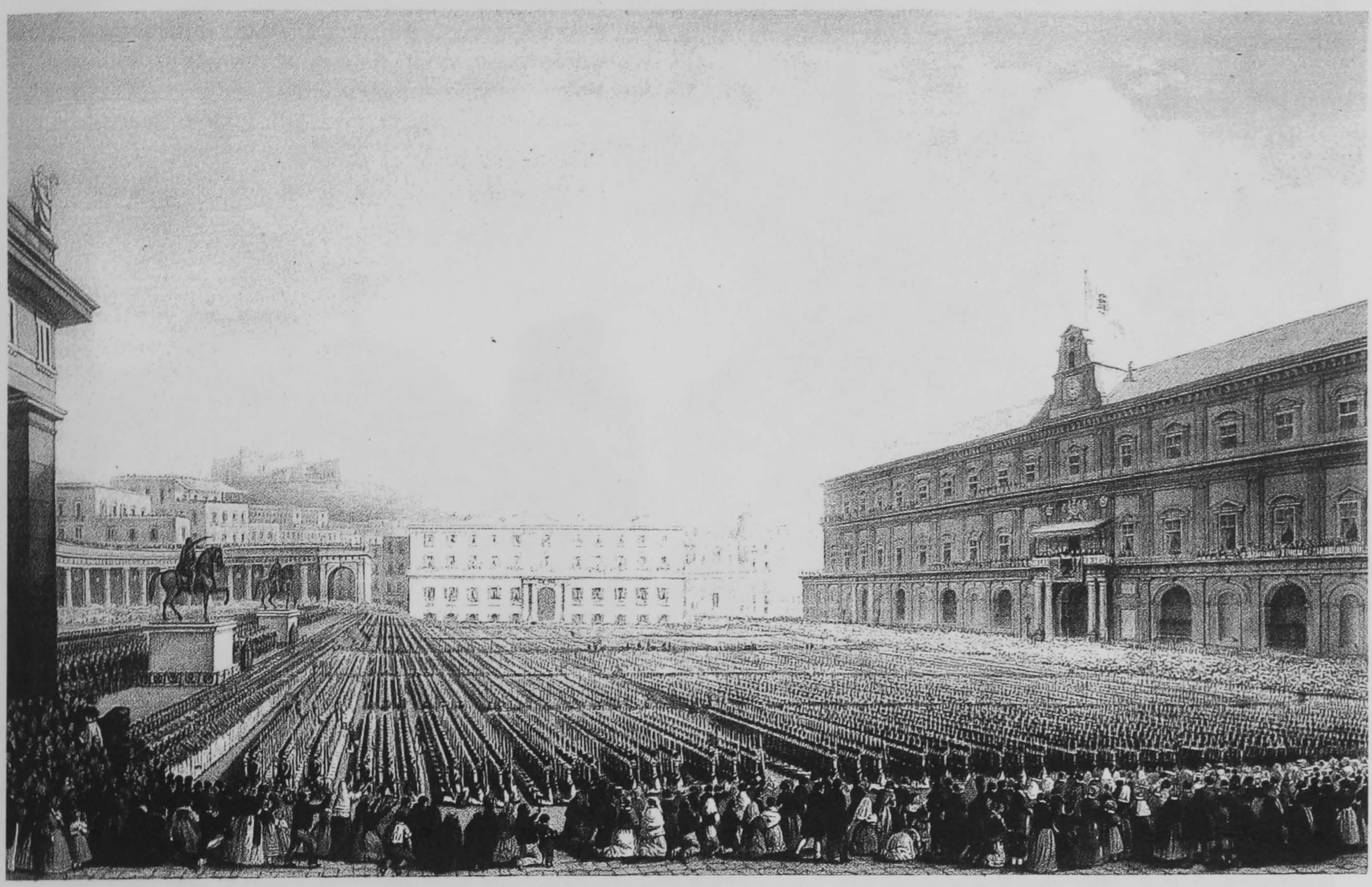
[7] Since it re-opened in 1953, Bar Gambrinus has campaigned for the return of its rear rooms, which on being confiscated, were assigned to the present occupants Banco di Napoli.

[8] The nearby Galleria Umberto I also functioned as a central meeting place. According to John Horne Burns, an American soldier stationed in Naples during the Second World War, this was the true heart of Naples (Ramondino and Müller 1992: 37). After the war this space gradually lost its appeal and has only recently experienced a revival with the rise in tourism.

by Matilde Serao in her description of late nineteenth century Naples (Serao 1994: 73), who also noted that the street immediately behind San Francesco di Paola served as a latrine (ibid.: 110). A public urinal was later installed at one end of the colonnade [**fig. 2.5b.**], and although this was removed during the 1950s, it remained a popular place (albeit for males) to urinate[9]. This liminal, 'low', everyday space directly bordered the cerimonial, regal arena of Piazza Plebiscito.

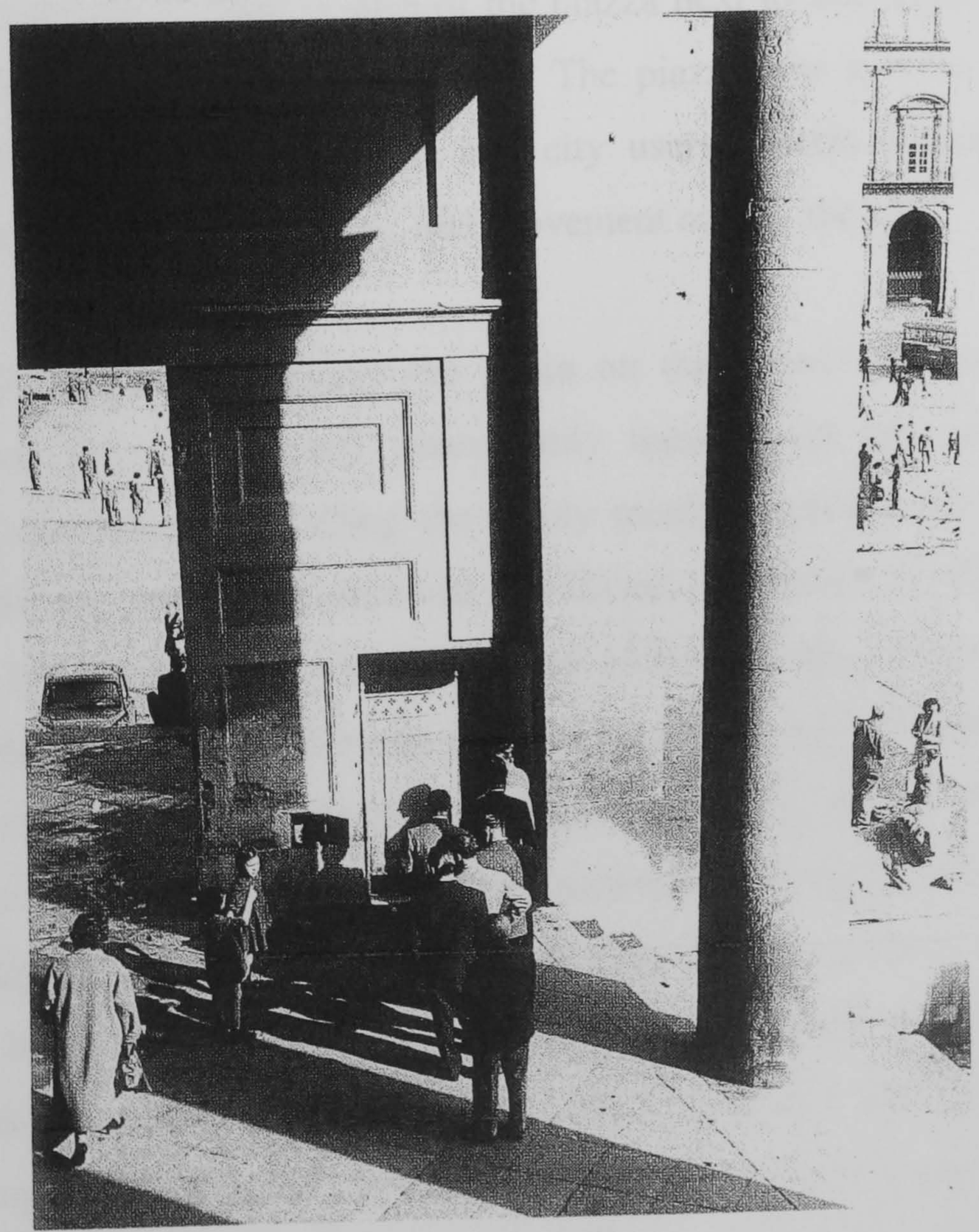
[9] The Lauro administration replaced the urinal with modern unisex public conveniences in a new subway under Piazza Trieste e Trento but this was closed the following decade.



2.2. Achille Vespa "Pio IX benedice le truppe" (1849) lithograph

2.3. Saverio della Gatta "L'albero della Libertà" (1800), watercolour

2.4a. "The piazza with fountain" (ca. 1890)
2.4b. "Threshing wheat" (1942)



2.5a. "Taxi strike" (1950)

2.5b. "Urinal under the colonnade" (1954)

4.2 The hegemony of the motor vehicle

The daily encounter with the piazza during the post-war era for the majority of people was mediated through transport. The street in front of the Royal Palace throughout the twentieth century constituted a crucial link on the city's east-west corridor. From the 1950s onwards, 'circulation' became a key word of urban policy as the city's inadequate and essentially nineteeth century road system struggled to cope with the rise in traffic. Attempts were made to maximise the infrastructural efficiency of the piazza. At the beginning of the 1970s, the chief city planner and later mayor of Naples, Bruno Milanesi, ordered the installment of bollards to reduce the width of the street and block it off from the rest of the piazza. This, he claimed, would prevent vehicles from stopping on the roadside and snarling up the flow of traffic (Milanesi 1972: 49). For almost three decades up to 1990, a strip of the piazza next to this street was used as a terminus for urban and regional bus services. The piazza was a point of arrival and departure for thousands of Neapolitans and city users. Piazza Plebiscito was thus engrained on a mental map of access to, and movement across, the city.

In January 1963, in order to relieve the strain on the *centro storico's* increasingly congested streets, the city council permanently transformed the centre of Piazza Plebiscito and other spaces, including the empty moat around the Maschio Angioino castle, into public car parks. The date was significant: it coincided with the climax of the 'Economic Miracle'. The period, which had seen a general national rise in living standards, had been characterized by an increase in private car ownership, particularly following the introduction onto the market of cheap models such as the Fiat 500 and 600[10]. In Naples, as in the rest of the south, increasing prosperity was restricted to a middle-class minority (Ginsborg 1989: 231). For the many *ceti medi* who had moved out to the new suburbs such as Vomero and Fuorigrotta but who worked in the offices and public institutions in the *centro storico*, the car became the favoured mode of transport. During the same week that Piazza Plebiscito became a car park, the Lauro owned newspaper *Roma* ran an article comparing the car to the '*salotto*', the Italian

[10] Between 1950 and 1964 the number of private cars in Italy rose from 342,000 to 4.67 million (Ginsborg 1989: 239), although during the 1960s. Naples had the lowest number of registered vehicles among the country's major cities (Mastrostefano 1969: 134).

word for parlour which was also used to describe the organized engagements of the urban high society:

"Today the automobile is owned by those who have the financial means, those for whom it represents a requirement for work, and by those who instead are forced to make considerable sacrifices to keep it...While at one time life revolved around the family and home, where there arose the necessity of the *salotto*, today we spend little time indoors. We live in the era of the day trip and of the 'weekend'. The automobile is needed so as not to make a bad impression in front of friends, colleagues and clients." (6/1/63).

The automobile still possessed the aura of novelty. Its purchase was equated with a desire to display personal prosperity and one's participation in modernity. As the new *salotto*, it represented both an intimate private space and a public status symbol.

The decision to turn the piazza into a car park caused little fuss in the local press. As the only low note on the historic day, *il Mattino* printed a photograph of the piazza's resident feral pigeons and lamented that most would now have to search for new "pastures" (3/1/63). Rather, arguments were raised over the effectiveness of the new arrangements. *Roma* complained that car club members would lose their parking privileges (3/1/63), *il Mattino* argued that while the available spaces were large they would not be sufficient to meet the demands of drivers (26/1/63), while both agreed that '*parcheggiatori abusivi*' (illegal car-park attendants) were likely to proliferate outside the designated areas and offer a cheaper service.

The local press was not indifferent to the issue of urban heritage. On the contrary, throughout the beginning of 1963, *il Mattino* published a series of articles highlighting the pitiful state of the *centro storico* and called for urgent repairs to buildings and improvements to street signs and lighting. However, the car was not considered incompatible with the city's architectural patrimony. New models were often advertised to the public in emblematic spaces such as the Galleria Umberto I and Piazza Plebiscito itself [**fig. 2.6a.**]. Instead, the car park played a crucial role in ordering the increasingly chaotic traffic of Naples and projecting a modern, civilized image of the city [**fig. 2.6b.**]. At the outset, Piazza Plebiscito was conceived above all as a sanctuary to the disciplined, non-*centro storico* middle-class driver. It was the uneducated motorist and not the car which was a cause for concern. For instance, *il Mattino* claimed that certain Neapolitans were, by character, uncontrollably prone to speed and road violence:

"Recent clamorous episodes..continue to persuade us of the immaturity of many to benefit from the fruits of technical progress" (12/3/63).

As well as certain drivers, pedestrians were similarly attacked. On the very same day it reported the new measures for Piazza Plebiscito, *il Mattino* started a month-long campaign against jaywalking. If pedestrians were to share the city with motorists, it argued, then they should also be subject to equally severe penalties to curb their indisciplined habits (3/1/63).

Piazza Plebiscito's traffic function was largely unquestioned over the following three decades, although, as the car became a mass commodity, enthusiasm for the automobile as a bourgeois privilege was subdued (Viale 1996: 28). From the late 1960s onwards, the city's traffic was a daily chronic problem (Allum 1973; Wanderlingh and Corsi 1987) [**fig. 2.7.**]. The congestion, pollution and noise caused by cars became indelibly linked with the city's negative image. According to one of Italy's leading journalists Miriam Mafai, the city was closer to Bombay than it was to Milan (*la Repubblica* 26/6/86). By 1990, the city possessed the highest level of respiratory disease, the dustiest streets and the slowest public transport in Italy (*la Repubblica* 27/1/90). It was calculated that it took less time to travel from Milan to Tunis in plane than it did to take the Number 140 bus from the historic suburb of Posillipo to the *centro storico* (ibid.). Piazza Plebiscito's role as a car park, bus station and main route remained fundamental in a city centre which had not reconfigured itself around motorized traffic. It was inconceivable that such a large open space in the *centro storico's* dense urban fabric be used for anything else. Certainly, by the 1980s, the original pristine image of the neatly arranged, well-kept vehicles of middle-class commuters had been overrun by all and sundry. A disorderly medley of jalopies sat side by side with the dented saloons of public employees, as municipal attendants were forced to compete with the *parcheggiatori abusivi* [**fig. 2.8.**].

While Piazza Plebiscito's traffic function predominated over everything else, this did not prevent the space from being used for other purposes. Demonstrations in the piazza, in fact, had the added incentive of obstructing traffic to draw attention to their demands. In 1989, for instance, a protest by construction workers blocked the piazza with

bulldozers, lorries and cement mixers, bringing the city to a "total standstill" (*la Repubblica* 4/3/89). The piazza was also occasionally used for organized public events, such as the Pope's visits to Naples in 1979 and 1990 and a free concert by local blues guitarist Pino Daniele in 1982, although some requests, such as the planned two hundredth anniversary celebrations of the city's military academy in 1987, were turned down by local authorities on the grounds that they would cause too much disruption (*la Repubblica* 11/10/87).

The piazza's role was sometimes 'turned upside down' during spontaneous mass gatherings. One such instant was the 1980 earthquake. Following the disaster, hundreds of residents from the Pallonetto and the Spanish Quarters spent over a week in the piazza in fear of aftershocks. A few pitched caravans in between the parked cars, others even constructed makeshift huts from foraged materials, but most passed the nights under blankets. Of all the open areas in the city which were suddenly transformed into mass encampments, Piazza Plebiscito was the one which received most media attention. It was described as "a gigantic open-air garage" which served as "the spyhole on the city's anguish" (*il Mattino* 25/11/80). Piazza Plebiscito later became the political nerve centre of post-earthquake operations after the government's Special Commissioner, Giuseppe Zamberletti, set up headquarters in the prefecture. The state's inadequate and tardy response to the intense social tensions in the city subsequently turned the piazza into an arena of social conflict. Local councillors spent all night vigils under Zamberletti's office in protest at the slowness of relief, there was a resurgence in organized unemployed demonstrations, while parked buses were repeatedly occupied by homeless families demanding alternative accomodation.

The local football team's first ever national championship triumph in May 1987 was an altogether different emotional experience but similarly provoked a collective reappropriation of public space. Almost the entire population of Naples took to the streets in celebration and open-air parties were organized in every neighbourhood. Areas previously perceived as off-limits to strangers, such as Forcella and the Spanish Quarters, were suddenly considered safe and accessible. Piazza Plebiscito was the setting for huge gatherings during the two weekends of festivities. Television specials dedicated to the champions were shown on a giant screen mounted in front of San Francesco di Paola. while a forty metre long banner with the words "*Non è più sogno*

ma è realtà" ("It's a dream come true"), sewn together by residents of Santa Lucia, was tied to the scaffolding around the Royal Palace. The piazza was variously described by reporters in *il Mattino* as "Naples on display" (11/5/87), "a huge sea of blue" (12/5/87) and "an explosion of joy" (13/5/87). Like the *quartieri*, the piazza was metamorphosed into a mass display of unbridled pleasure. The "desire for a piazza in a city without identity" (*il Mattino* 12/5/87) was used by the media to project a felicitous, harmonious and more positive image of the city to the rest of the nation.

While newspapers highlighted the role played in Piazza Plebiscito during these two 'unforgettable' events of the 1980s, the piazza would hardly feature in retrospective accounts. In the case of the earthquake, the piazza was connected with the immediate aftermath of the tremor and not with its deaths and damage, but this was soon overshadowed as the extent to the devestation in the *quartieri popolari* emerged. Moreover, it was in the neighbourhoods where the more emblematic protests – such as the occupation of public buildings – took place (Russo and Stajano 1981; Compagna 1981). During the *scudetto* celebrations, the piazza was used for its functional advantages, while its location along the main carnival route and proximity to some of the main street parties in the Spanish Quarters and the Pallonetto turned it into a crossroads of festivities. However, attention has subsequently focused on emblematic instances of jovial deviance (the swim in the 'Artichoke' fountain in the adjacent Piazza Trieste e Trento), the 'rediscovery' of monuments (through, for instance, the daubing of the statue of Dante in the colours of Napoli) as well as the murals which appeared on walls across the city (Signorelli 1996). The two occasions reflected the general peripheral status of the piazza in both official and popular narratives of Naples. The city was more readily represented and recognizable through features of the surrounding landscape, in other words Vesuvius and the Gulf of Naples, or unspecific alleyway scenes.

By the late 1980s, a small but vocal alliance of environmental and heritage groups had begun to call for the eviction of sedentary vehicles from parts of the *centro storico*[11]. Attention focused on the small piazzas of the *centro antico*, and the city's principle

[11] During the late 1970s in Naples, new left groups had organized pedestrian events to recuperate the series of steps linking Vomero with the *centro storico*, but these did not directly confront the issue of motorized traffic (Capasso, Niego and Vittoria 1982).

monuments, such as the Palazzo Reale whose courtyards were used as parking space by shopkeepers, office workers and local councillors. Their pressure sometimes bore the desired results, although closures were often carried out by the police on legal grounds, for instance during action against illegal car-park attendents, and not by the local council. The state of the city's traffic was a priority issue but anti-car measures, considered vote losers, were not at the top of the political agenda. This said, at the end of 1989, a campaign by pedestrian and environmental groups managed to persuade the council to pedestrianize the centre of Piazza Plebiscito (albeit leaving a small car park for prefecture employees and military officials). The closure was considered successful for the debate it provoked and an important sign that things could be done (Caniglia 1993; Ferrari 1993), but promoters were not particularly enthusiastic about the piazza's new arrangement. The space cordoned off from the surrounding gridlock by a line of tyres, was described by one journalist as "Fort Alamo" (*la Repubblica* 27/1/90). The aim had not been to reclaim Piazza Plebiscito, which had limited social and cultural benefits (Caniglia 1993). Rather, it was concluded that effective traffic control would have to encompass a wider area and target places frequently used by Neapolitans such as market areas (Capasso 1993).

While the bus terminal was permanently removed after the experiment, the car park swiftly returned. This was then reduced almost by half after work commenced in 1990 on the construction of an underground rapid tram link – the 'LTR' – between the *centro storico* and the football stadium in Fuorigrotta. This had originally been part of the state funded preparations for the *Italia90* World Cup Championships, but had never opened due to delays and safety defects. The public benefits offered by the LTR, which would have served what was already the best connected part of the city, appeared a secondary concern. The public resources which were poured into the project instead served primarily to create jobs and sustain a clientilistic system (Macry 1994: 154). Indeed, construction was suspended indefinitely after investigations into financial irregularities commenced in early 1993.

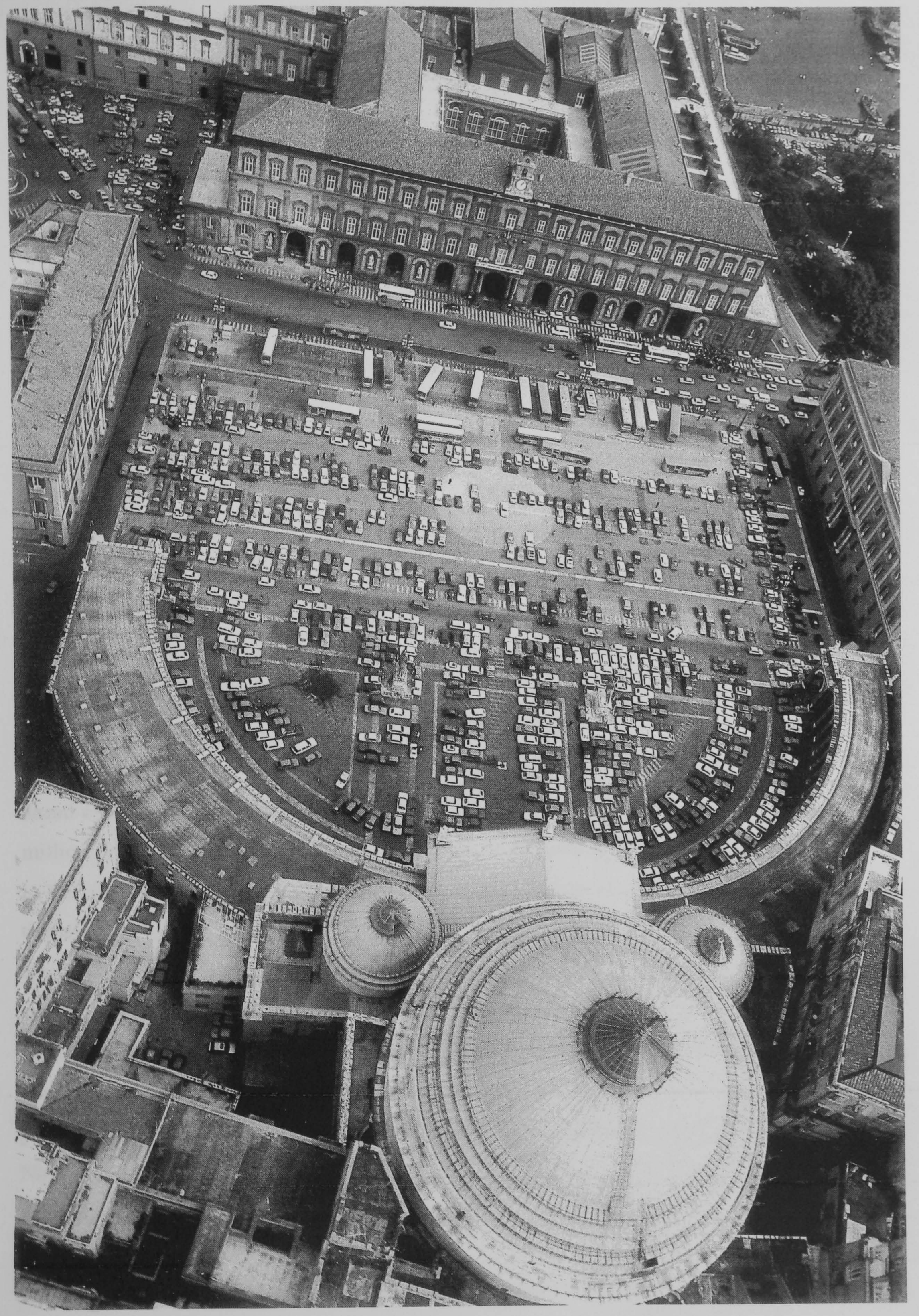
In 1993, nine small piazzas in the *centro antico* that had been used as illegal car parks were sequestrated by the courts and subsequently pedestrianized. Piazza Plebiscito, whose remaining section of car park was public, did not feature in this legal blitz. Ironically, in the same year, the council and local media were still debating the

practicalities of building a multistorey car park beneath the piazza which, since its official approval back in 1986, continued to be considered an ideal, if unrealistic, solution to the *centro storico's* traffic congestion. The total closure of the piazza to vehicles and its incorporation into a new urban vision would require an entirely different (and extraordinary) political situation.

2.6a. "Advertisement in Piazza" (1958)

2.6b. "Car park in piazza" (1967)

2.7. Traffic jam in Piazza Plebiscito at the end of the 1960s



2.8. Aerial view of car park during late 1980s

Chapter 5: The Regeneration of Piazza Plebiscito

5.1 The G7 facelift and pedestrianization

A key moment in the subsequent history of Piazza Plebiscito was in July 1993 when the Italian prime minister Carlo Azeglio Ciampi picked Naples (and specifically the Royal Palace) as the nation's venue for the following year's G7 summit. In the mean time, Antonio Bassolino would be elected the city's mayor and a new climate of cautious optimism would emerge. In February 1994 a commission, comprised of officials from the local administration, representatives from the government and the prefecture as well as experts and personnel from the cultural superintendencies, was set up to delegate state funds and oversee the hasty preparations for the event. The transformation of Piazza Plebiscito into the summit's centre stage was very much the focus of attention. The new arrangement sought to restore the piazza's monumental status and purge signs of urban neglect. Tyre-stained concrete slabs were replaced with volcanic tiles, bollards and chains were put in place to close off the adjacent streets, the surrounding façades of buildings were cleaned and repainted and the abandoned LTR construction site was removed [**fig. 2.9a.**]. The whole operation was completed in just eighty days, a week ahead of schedule, at a relatively low cost of just over 3 billion lire (approximately one million pounds). The local media read each stage in the piazza's facelift as a countdown to the city's most prestigious international event for generations. For the organizers, the transformation of the piazza encapsulated, in varying ways, the challenges facing the city: not only was it a race against time, but it was a test of institutional collaboration and organizational competence. Vezio de Lucia, assessor for 'Liveability' (town planning) and the administration's main representative on the G7 commission, declared that the piazza represented "a starting point and indicator of a new direction" after fifty years of speculation (De Lucia 1998: 10). Indeed he begins his "Planning Chronicles in Naples 1994-1997" (ibid.) with the 'tale' of Piazza Plebiscito which reads as the epic triumph of perserverence in the face of adversity.

Piazza Plebiscito, empty and resplendent in the summer sun and guarded by armed police, was the emblem of the G7 summit of July 1994 [**fig. 2.9b.**]. The image of the piazza was beamed around the world, offering an alternative vision of the city to the

traditional stereotypes of dirt and chaos or the spaghetti and gun that had famously graced the front cover of *Der Spiegel* in the late 1970s. At a local level, the piazza was immediately repositioned within the city's spatial hierarchy and was attributed a set of new characteristics. Commentators and journalists insisted on calling it the "*salotto di Napoli*". The term that had been used to describe the car in 1963 was now employed to conceive the piazza as an exclusive, well-kept meeting place. Indeed, four months later the piazza reassumed its 'ambassadorial' status during the United Nations international summit on organized crime which again was held in the Palazzo Reale. Other common descriptions in newspapers included "*biglietto di visita*" (visting card) and "*fiore all'occhiello*" (a feather in one's cap) which both implied that the piazza had been conferred honorary status over the rest of the city. By the end of the year *il Mattino* had also started to use the title "Piazza Grande", as if to suggest that Naples had earned itself a true North Italian style civic arena.

The neoclassical piazza was a fitting backdrop for the annual meeting of the world's economic superpowers. But the occasion also served to propel the piazza to the centre of a new urban discourse which valued cultural heritage over the motor car. The retrieval of the royal piazza, despite its undemocratic connotations, was a source of inspiration. The work had initially assumed the form of an archaeological dig. The architect responsible for the new design searched in vain for traces of the original nineteenth-century surface beneath the concrete, while repairs to tapestries in the Palazzo Reale revealed original Bourbon insignia that had been covered up after Unification. Bassolino saw the restoration as invoking "the era of the great monarchies [when Naples] was for a long time the capital of European culture" (Improta et al. 1994: 29). Reconsigned to the city and its citizens, *il Mattino* declared that Neapolitans were able to "rediscover" the piazza's "forgotten ornamental decorum" (*il Mattino* 3/6/94). This general enthusiasm for the city's particular history reflected the comprehensive re-evaluation of Naples's pre-1860 heritage that had begun back in the early 1980s with the large exhibitions dedicated to the cultural and civic traditions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Arcidiacono 1999: 15). But this was not to say that the piazza was suddenly reinterpreted by the city's politicians and media as a misunderstood 'enlightened' space. Rather, the patchwork of solemn events, popular feasts and bloody revolts which embellished accounts of the new piazza (Improta et al. 1994; De Lucia 1998) was part of a historical package which the city was now able to promote.

Moreover, apart from a handful of '*neo-borbonici*' who called for the restitution of the old name Largo Palazzo (which fell on deaf ears), all commentators, for once, diligently referred to the space as Piazza *del* Plebiscito, suggesting that it was the piazza's accumulation of history which was important and not the particular ideological significance of its past.

In spite of this apparent success story, the transformation of Piazza Plebiscito had to endure a series of hitches and was the subject of heated debates which threatened to jeopardize the city's carefully crafted appearance and which would continue to afflict the piazza after the G7 summit. Start to the work was delayed by a month after the company that had originally been awarded the contract withdrew under accusations that it was not in line with anti-mafia regulations. Controversy also lingered over the removal of the piazza's principle eyesore, the LTR building site. The government, the administration, the local public transport company as well as the LTR's constructors ANSALDO all firmly refused to fund its dismantlement and it was only after a number of weeks of stalemate that the prefect Umberto Improta was forced to allocate a billion lire for an additional contract. The matter was compounded by protesting construction workers who chained themselves to the machinery, demanding assurances that they would be re-employed. Up until the last minute, the very symbol of past mismanagement and inefficiency threatened to tarnish the city's rehabilitation. Indeed, *il Mattino*, during the critical moment of March and April referred to Piazza Plebiscito as "the piazza of discord" (26/3/94) "the thorn in the side of prefect Improta" (31/3/94), and "the piazza of controversies and delays" (6/4/94).

As work on the piazza got under way a dispute rose over the proposed paving. The prefect and government representative wanted to replace the dirty cracked concrete in the centre of the piazza with identical new slabs. This was considered the most viable solution given the time and money available. Their priority was the preparation for the G7 and not the resurrection of a single piazza. However, the administration, along with the Superintendents and heritage groups such as Italia Nostra, pressed for the entire space to be relaid with local basalt paving stones. New concrete slabs, it was argued, would be a travesty of the piazza's historical physiognomy and would ultimately signal a return to the car park after the summit. Although the surface of the piazza had changed through history – during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries its centre had even

consisted of beaten earth to accomodate the regular displays of the cavalry – by insisting on aesthetic criteria, the connoisseurs and direct inheritors of the piazza (the administration) stressed the value that an appropriately repaved piazza would have for posterity. In the face of mounting opposition (*il Mattino* claimed to have received many phone calls from "simple citizens..'supporting' for the stone of Vesuvius" (10/4/94)). the prefect acquiesced to the demands of the 'aesthetes' and a compromise was reached after a quarry in Terzigno at the foot of Vesuvius offered to extract the rock in the time available and cut costs by producing thinner tiles. The revamped physical aspect would indeed be fundamental for deploying the space in a new urban narrative. However, the incident demonstrated that from the outset the reconceived piazza was not a unanimous project but a terrain of conflicting interests.

The decision to maintain the piazza as a traffic-free zone after the end of the summit led to the Bassolino administration's first major public confrontation. In reality, the removal of the last remnants of the car park next to the colonnade caused little commotion. Rather, it was the proposed permanent closure of the street in front of the Royal Palace which provoked the most controversy. Shopkeepers in Santa Lucia (to the immediate south of Piazza Plebiscito) protested that the closure of the piazza cut the neighbourhood off from the rest of the city and damaged business. Their call for the immediate reopening of the street was backed by business leaders as well as the right wing opposition and their supporting newspapers such as *il Tempo* and *il Giornale di Napoli* who used the incident to attack the administration. Geppy Rippa of Forza Italia, for instance, declared:

> "This incident is further evidence that the so-called progressive pole suffers from a serious form of ignorance in urban affairs which will damage the entire city." (*Il Tempo* 14/7/94).

Numerous councillors on the centre-left were also wary of the impact the measure would have on the city and urged for a balance to be found between the new piazza and its old traffic function (Villone 2000). Various compromises were suggested, including Sunday closures and access to public transport and taxis.

The administration, however, refused to change its plans. Its intransigent position was supported by institutional figures such as the Superintendents Mario De Cunzo (Environmental and Architectural Assets) and Nicola Spinosa (Artistic and Historical

Assets), art and architectural experts, cultural and environmental groups and a significant section of the local media (*il Mattino* and *la Repubblica*). In an interview with *la Repubblica*, the vice-mayor and assessor of 'Mobility', Ada Becchi, declared:

> "Those who want to reopen Piazza del Plebiscito to traffic can carry on shouting but they won't intimidate me. The piazza is closed to cars and that's the way it's going to stay..Do we want to resign ourselves to the preponderance of the car which for decades denied the city of one of its most evocative settings?" (*la Repubblica* 14/7/94).

Bassolino was adamant that even limited access would only lead to a return of the piazza's old traffic function (*il Mattino* 19/7/94). The piazza's closure was presented as a democratic gesture: what had initially been the exclusive privilege for a handful of G7 delegates would now be consigned to all Neapolitans. Bassolino was convinced that if there were a local referendum, the vast majority of citizens would be in favour of the new-look piazza; proclaiming that "the protection of the monumental and artistic values of Piazza Plebiscito is more important than many other problems" and that its closure was "one of the most significant investments for tourism" (*il Mattino* 19/7/94). During the same press conference he revealed figures indicating a rise in tourism in the surrounding area since the end of the summit.

The closure of Piazza Plebiscito could never have been carried out under the old political sytem, nor without the impetus of a 'special occasion' like the G7. The incident was emblematic of a new style of decision making which would characterize the first Bassolino administration (Brancaccio 2000). The operation was carried out with an almost evangelical conviction that the new arrangement was for the city's benefit. But there was no debate within the political parties or any prior consultation with the public. This 'enlightened despotism' (McNeill 1999) began within the administration itself. Vezio De Lucia recollects how he had to convince his colleagues in the *giunta* that the closure of the piazza was in the city's general interests:

> "We explained to the hesitant ones that, apart from recuperating the piazza and preserving the results obtained with the G7, the closure was an important symbolic gesture which was incompatible with half measures...When the *giunta* was convinced, the war began." (De Lucia 1998: 17)

From now on, the adminstration's decisions were increasingly announced directly through the media. Debates would assume a routine format. A number of public

individuals and 'civic' associations would rally in support, while those interest groups adversely affected – in this case shopkeepers – would mobilize protest. through which the political opposition (here the right) would make itself publicly heard. Administrative politics was increasingly characterized by battles over principles (Brancaccio 2000). The ensuing confrontations would often be fought out in abrupt, spectacular fashion. Indeed, after the shopkeepers lowered their shutters in protest during the UN summit on crime in November 1994, and apart from the odd letter of complaint to the local press, there was no more public dissent over the closure of Piazza Plebiscito.

As far as the piazza itself was concerned, the dispute underlined the irreconcilability between a purely aesthetic concept of the piazza and a traffic function. The administration had to defend its decision by commiting itself to solving the city's traffic crisis, which included pledging money for buses in order to dissuade the use of private transport[12]. And in order to prevent imminent congestion in the surrounding streets, it had to swiftly reroute traffic along the coastal road beneath the piazza.

It would be wrong to simply describe the final outcome as the pedestrianization of a large central piazza. Certainly, the council's anti-car sentiment was well known. At the beginning of 1994, Ada Becchi, mused that "without cars, this city would be beautiful" (*La Repubblica* 4/1/94). Such attitudes reflected a political consensus on the centre-left. 'Car abuse' was synonymous with the urban neglect that had spiralled under previous administrations. Traffic-free zones enriched the quality of urban life in the *centro storico* by reclaiming pockets of public space. Bassolino later argued that while Piazza Plebiscito was a successful venue for organized public events, it was also important simply as a place to stroll:

> "the identity of a hundred thousand Neapolitans is beautiful, but so is the *passeggiata* in the middle of the night or in the morning of somebody who wants to be alone and reflect on life" (Bassolino 1996a: 60).

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[12] This would indeed become a central aspect of its policy for the *centro storico* over the next two terms: council bonds were sold on the New York stock exchange in 1996 and the financial return was used to pay for 300 new buses. In addition, in June 1999 a traffic restricted zone was created around the *centro antico* while new '*isole pedonali*' (pedestrain islands) were set up in Via Roma the main commercial street to the immediate north of Piazza Plebiscito in 1998 and in Santa Lucia in 2000.

But the piazza's new arrangement was not the response to a popular demand for a car-free zone. Ada Becchi herself admitted "it is not a traffic measure but a way of protecting art and monuments" (*la Repubblica* 16/7/94). Moreover, in the wake of the G7's symbolic success, it was a means of permanently eradicating a stage in the piazza's history in order to recuperate a more glorious, distant past. It is interesting that most narratives about the new piazza pay little or no attention to the closure of the street but focus on the removal of the car park which was never really a contentious issue. On the eve of the G7, the Neapolitan historian, Giuseppe Galasso, had indignantly commented:

> "In no way does the public car park or the bus terminal render justice to the piazza, because this use..not only offends the piazza's name but its whole spatial and historical character." (Galasso 1994: 27)

The sea of stationary vehicles was a far more powerful negative image against which to build an alternative representation of the city than a passing line of cars and buses. After 1994, the car-park period was generally interpreted as a hiatus in the piazza's history which had robbed the space of memory[13]. Its removal therefore provided a clean slate from which to reconstruct (and invent) a tradition of place.

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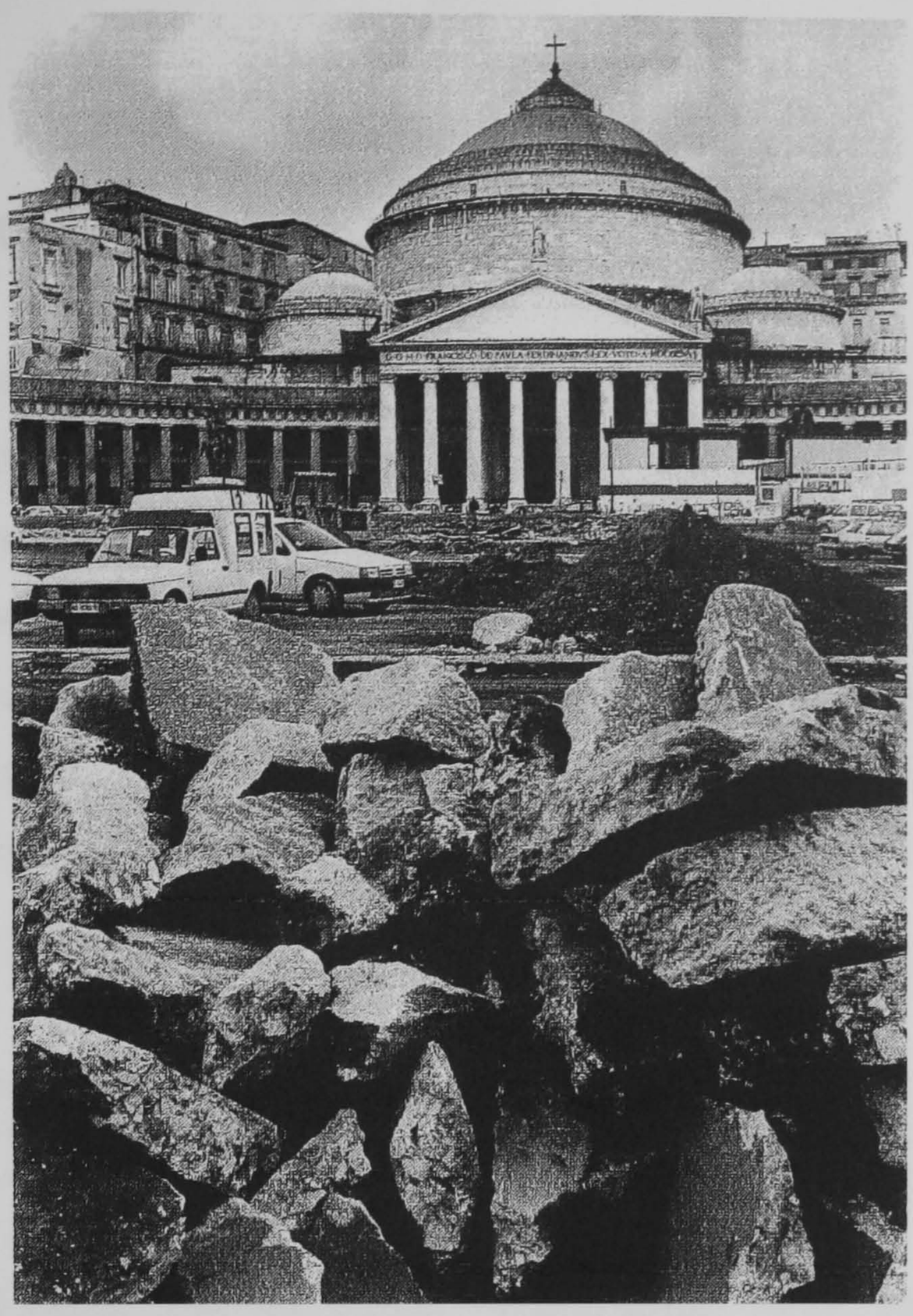
[13] Indeed, no commentator seems to remember when the piazza became a car park or, for that matter, the debates surrounding its experimental closure in 1989.



2.9a. "Repaving the Piazza" (1994)
2.9b. "The flags of the G7" (1994)

5.2 The construction of a symbolic space

After the G7 summit, the administration and official promoters of Piazza Plebiscito were faced with a dilemma. Now that the cars were gone, the space had to be assigned some form of practical role in order to safeguard and exploit its new position. The problems of managing such an enormous arena, which had frightened off the political parties during election campaigns, remained. Empty spaces are associated with the abstract drawings of planners, with abandonment and urban decline or the restricted zones of global summits but not with regenerated parts of a city centre (Gomorra 1999). Jane Jacobs had offered words of warning back in the early 1960s:

> "Where pedestrian separation is undertaken as some sort of abstract nicety…the arrangement goes unappreciated..Unmanageable city vacuums are by no means preferable to unmanageable city traffic" (Jacobs 1961: 362).

Early on, Bassolino had stated that the piazza needed to be made appealling: "a desolately empty piazza, in the long run, will not be very useful" (*il Mattino* 19/7/94). The usual panel of experts made their proposals public while the local press gathered the thoughts of readers in opinion polls. The debate was marked by conflicting opinions. Some suggested ways to 'refill' the space, while others who had been among the more fervent advocates of the car-free piazza considered the question of 'reanimation' peripheral. For instance, the planning assessor, Vezio de Lucia, recalling his debate with the *giunta*, exclaimed:

> "The piazza had to remain empty and silent. So that meant no traffic, but no flowers boxes or benches either. There should be nothing at all." (De Lucia 1998: 17).

Cesare De Seta, the eminent architectural historian, on the other hand described the piazza a "vacuum…so it would be necessary to artifically create a programme which would allow it to be transformed into a place of life" (*la Repubblica* 6/11/94). The Superintendent Mario de Cunzo envisioned Piazza Plebiscito as part of a monumental pedestrian zone ("*un grande salotto*") which would stretch from San Francesco di Paola to Maschio Angioino,

"where cafés and art galleries would rise..An island reserved for art, music, culture, performances, a sort of *agorà*..Piazza del Plebiscito like piazza San Marco [in Venice]?..The comparison is stimulating." (Improta et al. 1994: 61-62).

It was agreed that the suitable launch pad for the space's 'reanimation' was not in the piazza itself but under the colonnade. This, it should be remembered, had long been considered a marginal space. De Cunzo pointed out that: "before work for the G7 started, the colonnade was a latrine" (ibid.: 62). In July 1994, a committee was set up consisting of prefecture officials, the Superintendents and members of the administration to draw up plans for compatible activities such as craft and antique shops, exhibition spaces and cafés which would be established in the small state-owned spaces under the colonnade. Together with proposed new lighting, their declared aim was to encourage certain uses such as tourism and the *passeggiata* and deter undesirables. The Communist Refoundation assessor for Normality, Raffaele Tecce, insisted: "Only if there are bars and art galleries under the colonnade will it be possible to keep the drug addicts and bad lads ["*ragazacci*"] away" (*la Repubblica* 23/12/95). However, very little has actually been done to officially revitalize the daily piazza and it was not until 2000 that a lighting system (which was able to shed the piazza in different colours) was inaugurated and the first new activities were opened under the colonnade (although the tourist research office and exhibition space of the city council's planning department have hardly attracted more people).

Piazza Plebiscito was far more effectively deployed as a venue for organized events. A variety of events, from military parades and state celebrations (such as the 50th anniversary of Liberation in April 1995) to pop concerts and fundraising galas, exploited the open space and legitimated the piazza's elevated status. This was by no means a novel role, but it became an increasingly frequent and spectacular one. Some events became annual appointments, such as the 'New Year's Eve in Piazza', which sought to forge a link between the piazza and Neapolitans by establishing a sense of tradition. Attempts were also made to directly re-evoke the piazza's historical function. In 1997, a giant papier-mâché replica of a '*Macchina di Festa*', an elaborate pagoda-like construction which was the main carnival attraction during the reign of the Viceroys, was mounted in the centre of the piazza by the Superintendency. The presentation catalogue declared that the initiative

"arises from the wish of a number of Neapolitan academics to retrieve the social role of this great urban space for the sake of public memory and custom." (Lattuada 1997: 135).

Many of these organized events were, especially in the first few years, very successful and attracted people from across the city and region. The local and national media took a close interest in them, while some were organized by television companies for live broadcasts. The New Year's Eve celebrations were particularly massive occasions. The 1995-6 edition, featuring fireworks, concerts, recitals and high wire acrobats, drew over half a million people. It was shown live on state television to an estimated audience of ten million while the image of a bursting Piazza Plebiscito graced the front pages of national newspapers.

The success of Piazza Plebiscito led to a plethora of requests. After the last minute cancellation in June 1995 of a planned variety show in Piazza Plebiscito which was accused of amateurish organization, unsuitable decor and tasteless commercialism, a special commission was set up by the Superintendency and administration to lay down strict regulations regarding the use of public space in the *centro storico*. As a result, a proposal by a local sports club at the beginning of 1996 for a beach volleyball tournament, which would have seen the piazza covered in sand, was immediately rejected. In a written statement to the media, the new Superintendent for Environmental and Architectural Assets, Giuseppe Zampino, spelt out his reasons :

"This Superintendency considers the idea of covering the space with sand so as to allow a sporting event to take place absolutely incompatible with the decorum of the piazza. Such an event is supposed to be carried out in a natural environment and cannot be artificially recreated in a site of enormous historical and cultural interests to satisfy needs which have no cultural connotation." (*la Repubblica* 3/1/96)

His counterpart Nicola Spinosa added:

"A beach volleyball tournament in Piazza del Plebiscito would be a scandal; it would be like organizing a football match in piazza del Campo in Siena."(ibid.).

The intransigent Superintendents' prime objective was to resist the vulgarization of the piazza and prevent the official sanctioning of any relapse into the past. Football may not be played in Piazza del Campo (although horse racing is welcome) but a historical antecedent is annually disputed in Piazza delle Signorie in Florence. Such events are

ritually re-enacted, in part, to maintain a cultural tradition of place. In the case of Piazza Plebiscito, a sense of heritage needed to be invented and this included determining which 'popular' uses were historically and culturally significant.

Issues about decorum, heritage, tradition and status were closely bound to the symbolic attributes which were ascribed to Piazza Plebiscito. There had previously been half-hearted attempts to harness the emblematic potential of the piazza. In 1985, a replica fountain was installed in front of the Royal Palace to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Serino aqueduct but this never worked and rapidly turned into a rubbish dump. In 1990, the piazza was chosen as part of the national '*progetto isole*' for the 1990 World Cup with the aim of promoting the cities hosting the tournament, but this never got further than the press conference. The G7 facelift was the fundamental turning point. With its literal and metaphorical cleaning for the event, the piazza was able to extricate itself from the legacy of urban neglect. As a symbol, it worked at different levels.

Firstly, the piazza was deployed as a new urban emblem. The cultural repositioning of the restored piazza at the heart of the city simultaneously relocated Naples in national and international space. News items on tourism broadcast on national television now included images of Piazza Plebiscito alongside the more traditional shots of Piazza San Marco in Venice and the Colosseum in Rome. Vezio de Lucia was unequivocal:

> "Naples did not have a centre before the Bassolino administration, a "zero point" from which to measure distances and which could be proudly displayed in front of the world. Or rather it had lost it, just as it had lost a great deal in identity and confidence in its own resources."(De Lucia 1997: 13).

Its shift from a marginal position to the centre of attention can be exemplified by comparing two images. The first is a tourist poster for Naples, in circulation immediately prior to the G7 summit, which urges the visitor to explore the "many wonders" that the city has to offer [**fig. 2.10.**]. This consists of a photomontage of the city's monuments and cultural traditions, including a close-up of the façade of San Francesco di Paola, arranged in the shape of Vesuvius. The suggestion is that these various two-dimensional fragments are only presentable and perceptible as part of a recognizable whole (the extra-urban volcano). The second image is the cover to a tourist map of Naples from 1996 [**fig. 2.11.**]. The traditional view *over* the Gulf of Naples is

replaced by an internal urban setting. The same view of San Francesco di Paola used in the tourist poster now pans back to incorporate the empty semicircle of Piazza Plebiscito. The built and non-built space of the piazza are now used together to signify Naples[14].

Secondly, Piazza Plebiscito functioned as a metaphor for urban regeneration. Representations of Piazza Plebiscito in the local and national press played a fundamental role in transmitting this new discourse, both blatantly (for instance by referring to it as the 'symbol of the Neapolitan Renaissance') and more indirectly as it became a continual source of newsworthy events. The piazza represented the beginning of a new city, "an idea of development for the city" as the mayor put it (Bassolino 1996a: 60), where order and cleanliness replaced the chaos and dirt of yesteryear. It reflected the importance attached to cultural heritage as an alternative economic resource to state funded development. This "heritage landscape" (Goss 1997: 182) represented a beachhead for the restoration and urban revival of the rest of the *centro storico*. The piazza was also, as Bassolino claimed, a tourist investment. Its attraction was both as a safe, manageable place for tour groups and independent visitors and as a new monument which would be incorporated into the city's official tourist trails '*Le Vie dell'Arte*'. The image of an empty or sparsely populated piazza became an increasingly common subject for picture postcards although, it must be said, it is still not as popular as the classic vista over the Gulf of Naples[15] [**figs. 2.12a. & 2.12b.**]. Most importantly, the piazza was a means of promoting a new Naples on a national and international stage. After the success of the G7, Bassolino went to Turin to encourage Gianni Agnelli (owner of FIAT) and fellow businessmen to reconsider Naples's credentials, while at the end of 1995 he travelled to America to entice potential investors after the financial agency Moody's increased the city's credit rating (Marrone 1996). The effect of Piazza Plebiscito did not directly lead to private money being poured into the city (which was actually minimal) but, as a symbol of urban renewal, it certainly represented one of the city's selling points.

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[14] Photographic images of the piazza traditionally portrayed the Royal Palace, but following the restoration, camera lenses focused on the colonnade and the church. One reason is that such a shot accentuated the cleared space of the piazza.

[15] Before 1994, there had been very few images of the piazza, although one of the few examples discovered got round the problem of the car park by shrouding the vehicles in an artifical fog. In 1999, according to a personal survey, between 20 and 30% of postcards on sale at newspaper stands or tobacconists featured the piazza in some way.

As an exportable commodity, Piazza Plebiscito became the frequent backdrop for advertising campaigns. Local businesses and national companies were quick to exploit the refashioned (empty) piazza as a sort of exclusive showroom. For example, the Neapolitan furniture manufacturer Ferrari used the colonnades to publicize its upmarket products [**fig. 2.13.**]. The accompanying slogan "La città è casa, Ferrari è in città" ("The city's our home, Ferrari's in the city") alludes both to the piazza's status as a '*salotto*' and the shop's location within a resurgent *centro storico*[16]. The airline Meridiana inserted one of its jumbo jets in the centre of the piazza to publicize an intercity shuttle link, suggesting a convenient and, with San Francesco di Paola mutated into an airport terminal, exclusive service [**fig. 2.14.**]. The piazza was also used in a number of commercials, most famously by the biscuit makers Mulino Bianco which transformed Naples, with the aid of television trickery, into a rural idyll. The spot opens with a hydrofoil slicing through the grass of the Mediterranean as it approaches the port of Naples and ends with an Elysian depiction of Piazza Plebiscito as a cornfield. The commercial's artistic director stated:

"We chose locations which recalled the great job done during the G7..for us this [commercial] is a homage to the city's revival." (*la Repubblica* 18/2/95)

At a third level, Piazza Plebiscito was an explicitly political symbol. The transformation of the space, at zero-cost (in the sense that money was provided by central government) and with after-effects which far outweighed its practical implications, was exemplary of the administration's strategy of 'symbolic politics'. This is defined by Percy Allum as

"the creation of a political and cultural climate in which Neapolitans believe that change is possible even though the economic and social situation has not radically changed." (Geremicca 1997: 160)

The attention given to the piazza conferred visibility on the administration and served to project its achievements in reversing the city's fortunes. Two images of the piazza before and after the reign of Bassolino (the first showing the car park, the second showing a children-friendly space) were used as a logo for the centre-left's re-election manifesto in 2001 [**fig. 2.15.**]. The slogan "*Una Città in Cammino*" had a double

meaning: it referred to the increased provisions for pedestrians while suggesting that the city was now moving in the right direction. The piazza's political connotations, in particular its close association with the figure of the mayor, was a continual source of irritation for local opposition parties. For instance, Alleanza Nazionale in 2000 promised to reopen the road in front of the Royal Palace if the centre right were elected into power. In doing so, it directly acknowledged the piazza's position within local urban discourse: the plan was not simply devised as a traffic measure but as a means of removing the legacy of Bassolino.

Finally, the new Piazza Plebiscito was conceived as a forum for an inclusive citizenship and a site for rebuilding a sense of civic pride which would reinforce the psychological and cultural bond between Neapolitans and their city. Bassolino's reading of the piazza stressed the democratic, interactive nature of the space which he saw as holding a special significance for those who lived in the periphery.

> "The sense of identity which the symbol of piazza del Plebiscito has aroused in these last years..is not important for those citizens who live in wealthy districts, who everyday have before them an extraordinary panorama. This sense of identity is important above all for those who come from Secondigliano or from San Giovanni, from the harsh and difficult suburbs." (Bassolino 1996b: 54).

Even among those retiscent to extoll the virtues of the piazza, this notion of civicness was defended with conviction. For instance, Rifondazione Comunista, which criticized the privileged position that the piazza enjoyed over more pressing social and economic issues, protested after an entry fee was levied for a pop concert:

> "Give the piazza back to the city!..The piazza snatched from the clutches of urban neglect and returned to the city cannot fall back into the hands of speculators and dealers." (*Corriere del Mezzogiorno* 1/7/97)

The general discourse of citizenship pervaded all other debates about the piazza. The official initiatives by the administration and the cultural superintendencies aimed at sanctioning appropriate public functions of the piazza were couched in the language of 'civicness'. Organized events should encourage a sense of collective spirit, seek to identify with the city's history and cultural traditions while respecting the piazza`s

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[16] This reading was confirmed to me by the owner of the company.

heritage. These lofty, institutional appeals to *civicness*, however, sometimes appeared to translate into attempts to *civilize*.

QUANTE NAPOLI DELLE MERAVIGLIE, ANCORA

Tante, tantissime, perché Napoli non finisce mai di stupire per il suo essere e per il suo divenire.

Tante Napoli per darti arte, storia, cultura, paesaggi... sempre irripetibili, diversi sempre.

Tante Napoli delle meraviglie, ancora, per la capacità di guardare e ripensare il proprio spazio: il mare, il centro storico, il nuovo centro direzionale; negli incomparabili scenari d'oggi le premesse per un domani ancora più fecondo e splendido.

È l'impegno di tutti a reinventare un'estetica ed una filosofia di una città che nello svolgersi della storia è rimasta e sempre rimarrà stupefacente per il suo patrimonio umano.

Napoli. Ce n'è da vedere. Ce n'è da scoprire.

NAPOLI. LA MERAVIGLIA CONTINUA.

AZIENDA AUTONOMA DI SOGGIORNO CURA E TURISMO - NAPOLI - PALAZZO REALE - TEL. 081/418744

2.10. The church of San Francesco di Paola *minus* Piazza Plebiscito

PIANTE DI CITTÀ DE AGOSTINI

NAPOLI

Con tangenziale
e circondario

1:9000

1 cm = 90 metri

con indice dei nomi
monumenti e servizi evidenziati

ISTITUTO GEOGRAFICO
DeAGOSTINI

2.11. The church of San Francesco di Paola *plus* Piazza Plebiscito

NAPOLI

Piazza
PLEBISCITO

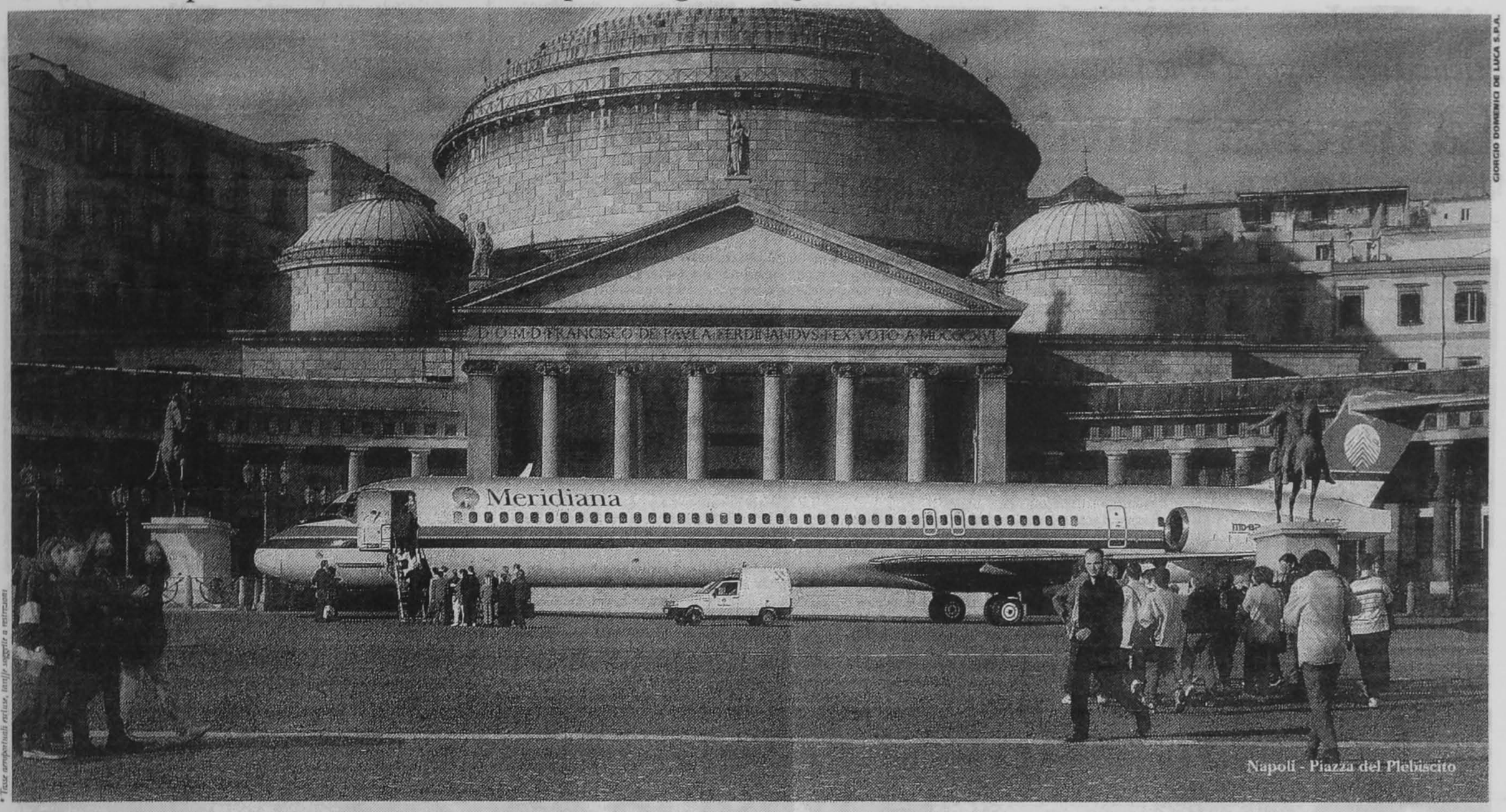
Capitale d'arte

NAPOLI

2.12a. A new postcard image of Piazza Plebiscito
2.12b. The traditional postcard vista from Mergellina looking over Vesuvius and the Gulf of Naples

2.13. Newspaper advertisement of the Neapolitan furniture manufacturer *Ferrari*

Due voli Napoli-Verona, due voli Napoli-Cagliari. Quattro occasioni Meridiana.



* Tasse aeroportuali escluse, tariffe soggette a variazioni

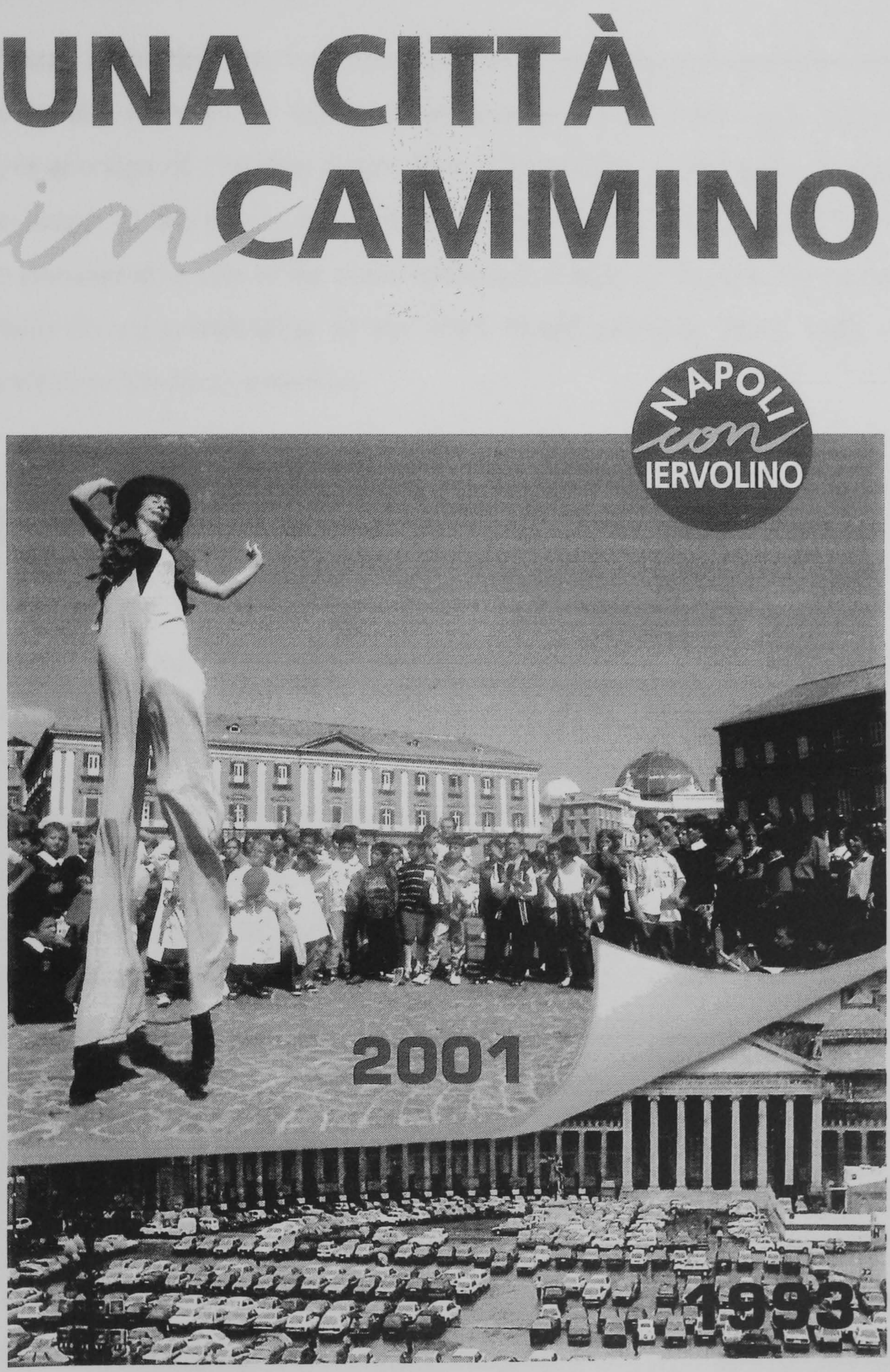
TARIFFA DI ANDATA E RITORNO PER PASSEGGERO*									
Lire 150.000 (fino al 2 aprile)					Lire 160.000 (fino al 9 aprile)				
Da/Per	Validità	Volo	Partenza	Arrivo	Da/Per	Validità	Volo	Partenza	Arrivo
Da Napoli a Verona	26.03	IG593	09.10	10.30	Da Napoli a Cagliari	01.04	IG138	09.15	10.40
	26.03	IG597	20.30	21.50		01.04	IG140	20.45	22.10
Da Verona a Napoli	26.03	IG592	07.10	08.30	Da Cagliari a Napoli	01.04	IG137	07.20	08.45
	26.03	IG596	18.30	19.50		01.04	IG139	18.40	20.05

Meridiana presenta due imperdibili offerte in partenza da Napoli. Dal 26 marzo raddoppiano i voli per Verona: fino al 2 aprile il biglietto andata e ritorno costa solo 150.000 lire. Dal 1° aprile invece, decollano due nuovi collegamenti con Cagliari: fino al 9 aprile, andate e tornate con sole 160.000 lire. Chiamate subito il vostro Agente di Viaggio di fiducia, l'Ufficio Meridiana di Napoli ***800.555092*** *o il Centro Prenotazioni Meridiana. Le novità vi aspettano.*

CENTRO PRENOTAZIONI 199.111333

Meridiana
www.meridiana.it

2.14. Newspaper advertisement of the Italian airline *Meridiana*



2.15. Cover of election manifesto of successful centre-left mayoral candidate, Rosa Russo Iervolino (2001)

5.3 Challenges to the consensus: the assault of *La Montagna del Sale* and the *Disoccupati Organizzati*

The new Piazza Plebiscito was very successful as a material and symbolic resource; whether as the site for massive public events that had been scarce only a few years previously, or as a sign of a brighter future. One risk was that all this might be worn out. Indeed, the image of the piazza was reproduced to such an extent that it inevitably began to be considered as trite as the more traditional images of Naples. For instance the *Corriere della Sera's* presentation of the 2001 Pirelli calendar which made use of Neapolitan villas as locations remarked:

> "Here is a Naples far removed from the usual scenes of alleyways, Piazza Plebiscito and the unmistakeable profile of Vesuvius." (*Corriere della Sera [Sette]* 16/11/00)

However, the closure of the piazza also led to unintended (although not entirely unforeseen) consequences. The giant open space was turned into a football pitch by local children and was continually crossed by motorcyclists[17]. The official promoters of the piazza regarded the young footballers an inevitable consequence which underlined the severe lack of recreational areas in the *centro storico*. The '*motorino*', on the other hand, was considered the piazza's principle adversary. The new vice mayor Riccardo Marone blamed the "shameful spectacle" of local residents' 'races' on the "the indiscipline of Neapolitans" and inadequate policing (*la Repubblica* 8/8/95), while the assessor for tourism, Giulia Parente, considered the motorized incursions as "the eternal threat to the revival of the piazza" (23/12/95). The *motorino* was a particularly ambivalent urban accessory. During the early 1990s, it had been seen as the answer to traffic problems. The former Green mayor of Rome, Francesco Rutelli, had championed its use as an environment-friendly alternative to the car, while in 1997, the Ulivo government introduced part exchange incentives to boost the ailing Italian scooter industry. However, during the same decade, and especially in Naples, *motorini* were increasingly construed as an ill of urban life: there were too many of them, they were noisy, they polluted, they got everywhere – which included slipping between bollards and crossing Piazza Plebiscito. It was the return of the abject, only without a roof and

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[17] Back in 1990 after the temporary closure of Piazza Plebiscito, Aldo Capasso had commented: "The emptying [of the piazza] cannot offer moments of aggregation, given its enormous dimensions, but only football pitches and race tracks for *motorini*."(Capasso 1993: 48).

doors and much more difficult to control. And although *motorini* were not the "private cocoons of glass and metal" that cars were (Sheller and Urry 2000: 747), they were, in certain hands, a trope for anti-social behaviour and general incivility.

The conflicts surrounding the everyday lived space of Piazza Plebiscito will be examined in the following chapter. Here, two specific episodes are selected to examine the ways in which official meanings and uses assigned to Piazza Plebiscito were challenged from below: the case of '*La Montagna del Sale*', a huge installation by Mimmo Paladino erected in December 1995, and a large unemployed demonstration in February 1997.

Paladino's piece, consisting of a giant mound of salt perforated with wooden horses [**fig. 2.16.**], was the first of Piazza Plebiscito's annual encounters with public art and the centre piece of the city's New Year celebrations[18]. More than any other installation, the work became a symbol within the symbol and its image was used on conference posters and covers of books dealing with the question of contemporary Naples. The presence of contemporary 'blue-chip' art (Miles 1998) in the piazza acted to promote a sophisticated, modern and adventurous city. Bassolino read *La Montagna del Sale* as a clear metaphor of the city's renaissance: the wooden horses symbolized the people of Naples while the summit represented the challenge of regeneration (*il Mattino* 24/12/95).

However, to the dismay of its organizers and the local press, numerous Neaoplitans did indeed climb to the mountain's summit. Salt was removed by the bag load. Some of the pilferers justified their disobedience as an act of devotion to the city's mayor: "because the salt of Bassolino brings good luck" (*il Mattino* 28/12/95). The structure had to be regularly repaired and lorries were needed to deliver extra salt to cover up the areas where the wooden framework had become exposed. A few cautiously welcomed the physical interaction between art and public or at least appealed for calm. The ever-phlegmatic Bassolino remarked: "there's no need to get alarmed. Certainly, a little more attention would avoid matters getting worse..Neapolitans, let's enjoy beautiful things together." (*il Mattino* 27/12/95). The more vociferous protests revealed less about the

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[18] Subsequent artists were: Jannis Kounellis in 1996, Mario Merz in 1997, Gilberto Zorio in 1998, Giulio Paolini in 1999 and Anish Kapoor in 2000.

significance of public art than about notions of urban propriety. Most of the assailants were instantly identified by the press as "*scugnizzi*" (street urchins) who hailed from the surrounding neighbourhoods, and for whom the installation was either a battlefield or a playground (*la Repubblica* 28/12/95). While the children's transgression was considered unfortunate but inevitable (for a few it even added local flavour to the piece), the incursions of adults, or worse, whole families were deemed totally unacceptable. Paladino himself complained:

> "The *scugnizzi* are one thing, but I cannot understand families who have their photos taken on the backs of horses. This represents a lack of knowledge: it is not a toy." (*la Repubblica* 3/1/96)

In response, measures were taken to increase controls and encourage public awareness. Volunteers were mobilized to patrol *La Montagna del Sale*, while *il Mattino* organized, with the help of the Superintendents and the artist himself, guided tours of both the installation and the piazza. The uneducable children had to be restrained, the ignorant were to be enlightened.

As a tactile piece, *La Montagna del Sale* was a resounding success, but as an object of contemplation it appealed to a more particular public. Those who remained behind the railings or were at least willing to discursively disapprove of its aesthetic form were referred to by the press as "Neapolitans", whereas those who insisted on physical contact were stripped of their civic status and described as "vandals" (*il Mattino* 2/1/96) or "the terrible children from the Pallonetto and Spanish Quarters" (*la Repubblica* 28/12/95). In other words, a tautology was constructed whereby all 'Neapolitans' were well-behaved and civic-minded. But while there had initially been debate over the legitimacy of publicly financing Paladino's piece, nobody had questioned the practical significance of placing a giant installation in the middle of Piazza Plebiscito. The piazza was reconceived as an exhibition space for the whole of the city which therefore involved delimiting boundaries of appropriate behaviour. In his critical analysis of the role of public art in urban development, Malcom Miles argues that a democratic public art needs to pose questions about the relationships between people and place (Miles 1998: 222). Because the post-G7 piazza was conceived as a tabula rasa, the idea that there might be other long-standing local ties with the space was never taken into consideration. Alternative uses which disturbed the dominant vision were therefore

labelled as deviant. The "vandals" did not intentionally contest the symbolism of the piazza but, by their continual de(con)struction of *La Montagna di Sale*, they exposed the bounded nature of a civic cultural politics and undermined official definitions about the piazza.

With its symbolization at the centre of a regenerational discourse, Piazza Plebiscito became a natural target for those who challenged the wider ramifications of urban change in Naples. The publicity surrounding the piazza was criticized as deflecting attention further away from the city's unsolved problems such as housing shortages and chronic unemployment. Some groups took advantage of the media's interest in the piazza to transmit their protest, none more so than the various organized unemployed factions. In February 1995 they occupied the Palazzo Reale and later organized a picket in front of *La Montagna di Sale*, while demonstrations in front of the prefecture became increasingly frequent[19]. Although demonstrations had historically taken place in Piazza Plebiscito, protests in the post-G7 piazza certainly began to acquire greater significance. This was most apparent in February 1997 when over 200 '*corsisti*' (unemployed enrolled on job training schemes) occupied the roof of San Francesco di Paola to demand the release of government money for 5,000 promised jobs. The quotes in the press were inevitable. An occupant interviewed declared: "we wanted to draw attention to the drama of the unemployed from the city's *salotto buono*" (*il Mattino* 19/2/97). Three days later, a march of 15,000 people organized by the trade unions ended in clashes between police and demonstrators in Piazza Plebiscito. Police in riot gear let off tear gas and baton charged the crowd, while protesters responded by hurling cobble stones and other makeshift missiles [**fig. 2.17.**]. By the end of the half-hour violent conflict, the piazza had assumed the appearance of a battlefield: shattered glass and debris were strewn everywhere and blood stains were visible on the new paving. The scenes – described by *la Repubblica* as "warfare in the '*salotto*' of Naples" (22/2/97) – provoked a range of heated local and national reactions. While the organizers and the Minister of Interior Giorgio Napolitano blamed troublemakers from the unemployed

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[19] The unemployed have traditionally been organized in various 'lists' which range in political sympathies from the extreme right to the extreme left. Demonstrations usually follow a set itinerary between different ports of call: the prefecture in Piazza Plebiscito, the town hall in Piazza Municipio, and the seat of the Regional Government in Via Santa Lucia. Usually never numbering more than a few hundred, tactics often involve causing maximum disruption in the city. In January 1997, a group occupied Via Acton on the sea front (the main east-west axis), forcing Massimo Paolucci (assessor for Mobility) to temporarily reopen Piazza Plebiscito to vehicles in order to unblock the traffic jams elsewhere.

groups who had "infiltrated" the demonstration, protesters blamed the rash actions of the police. Bassolino and left leaders such as Fausto Bertinotti called on the government to quickly resolve the issue of employment. The local right wing opposition exploited the symbolic connotations of the event to attack the Bassolino administration. Antonio Martusciello regional coordinator of Forza Italia proclaimed:

"We are all paying the price of three years during which an entire administration (and the mayor in particular) has dedicated itself to the worship of image" (*il Mattino* 24/2/97).

Meanwhile, allies of Bassolino retracted on the rhetorical metaphors. Mirella Barracco, president of *Napoli 99*, bemoaned the superficiality of the renaissance thesis:

"It was wrong to talk about a renaissance. The revival was only a beginning from which to build upon. What I cannot stand is this univocal representation of Naples: either everything is negative as in the past or only positive, as has been the case during the last few years. The government needs to intervene. Bassolino cannot resolve everything." (ibid.).

It is unlikely there would have been the same public reaction if the disturbances had taken place elsewhere. The success of Piazza Plebiscito as a symbol was a mixed blessing. The demonstration reflected how fabricating an image of urban renewal could easily backfire. The contestation in the city's *salotto* was emphasised more by the press and certain commentators than by the demonstrators themselves (whose protest was primarily directed at central government). The piazza became a momentary gauge for social tensions in the city, but traces of conflict were rapidly erased. For *il Mattino*, the *salotto* was only temporarily placed into doubt. One week after the disturbances, it printed an aerial photograph of the piazza accompanied with the title: "Piazza del Plebiscito, the symbol of the Neapolitan Renaissance" (28/2/97).

La Montagna di Sale and the unemployed demonstration were two emblematic episodes in which the official meanings and prescribed uses of the piazza were challenged. They underlined the problems involved, on the one hand, with trying to impose a sense of order and urban decorum, and, on the other, with deploying the space as a symbol. They also represented two different forms of spatial conflict. In the first case, this principally took the form of a spontaneous, transgressive manipulation of an officially sponsored piece of art, while during the demonstration, this was more an issue of conscious

contestation. Protesters were able to oppose the political significance of the piazza by acknowledging the hegemonic representations of the space (Hubbard 1996: 1458).

Such events would be forgotten or reinterpreted with hindsight. Instances of conflict were co-opted into an unequivocal narrative about urban improvement. The regular (uneventful) protests in Piazza Plebiscito would be considered a democratic feature that had been made possible by the piazza's transformation (Viviani 1999). The scandal provoked by the '*Montagna del Sale*' was retrospectively reread as a triumph of democratic public art. Eduardo Cicelyn, who as organizer of the initiative had originally objected to the misuse of the installation, reminisced in 1998:

> "The mountain of salt was climbed day and night..In this way, everyone created their own game. The artists created according to necessity, but the people continued to live, for better or worse, as they had always done. For one who seriously loves contemporary art perhaps the real pleasures of these works are their transiency, their fleetingness, the way that they are there without a precise need to dominate the space, but almost abandoned to the metropolitan destiny of the piazza; ready for anything and without shame." (Dogana 1998: no page number. Original translation).

The regenerational narrative and promotion of Piazza Plebiscito distances itself from any potentially radical or subversive meanings through what has been dubbed "re-semanticisation" (Hall 1997: 216). The reconceived Piazza Plebiscito 'discloses' certain positive aspects of Naples (art, tourism or civicness) and 'encloses' others considered negative such as violence and uncivilized behaviour. However, this decontextualized '*representation of space*' is continually reinterpreted and re-presented. Images of political and social conflict have entered into an alternative vocabulary about the city. The image of the police baton charge and retreating protesters by local photographer Luciano Ferrara, which was published in the national media at the time of the events, has since been adopted as a counter testimony to the 'Neapolitan renaissance'. For instance, it has most recently been used as an album cover by the local rap group 99 Posse. Meanwhile, the reappropriation of *La Montagna del Sale* would be re-enacted out at a less spectacular, more prosaic level in the everyday lived space of Piazza Plebiscito.

2.16. *La Montagna del Sale* by Mimmo Paladino (1995)

2.17. Unemployed demonstrators clash with police in front of the Prefecture while occupants of the church of San Francesco di Paola look down from the roof of the colonnade, February 1997

Chapter 6: An Ethnography of the New Piazza Plebiscito

6.1 Mapping the everyday piazza

The various sources used to reconstruct (and deconstruct) the official narrative of Piazza Plebiscito – from the local press and advertising campaigns to the accounts by members of the administration – demonstrate how the piazza was reimaged as a place of organized leisure and culture, tourism and civicness. They do not tell us very much about how the piazza has been experienced at the everyday level. The unemployed demonstration and the incursions on *La Montagna del Sale* pointed to different relationships with the space but they remained two exceptional incidents which became the focus of public debate by interrupting the "unchanging consensual calm" (Hall et al. 1978: 66). The G7 facelift and symbolization of Piazza Plebiscito turned the piazza into a constant provider of both spectacular and banal news. But even more prosaic happenings were interpreted within a consensual framework of meaning. For example, the fact that a sudden blackout in the piazza should lead to the electrical board receiving "an avalanche of telephone calls of concern and protest" was interpreted as proof of civic pride (*Corriere del Mezzogiorno* 2/7/97). The newspaper, which covered the story on its front page, exclaimed: "It must be said that the city watches over its symbols" (ibid.). Meanwhile, media reports about the daily crossing of *motorini*, which would occasionally surface following rumours of 'races' or during police 'blitzes', would point to the gap between the new piazza and the unrelenting incivility of many Neapolitans. Even those who used such "inevitable" incidents to criticize the political significance of the piazza or the naivety of the administration, did so by subscribing to a general debate about the piazza as a 'supra-quotidian' signifier of urban change.

Routine descriptions of the piazza in the media would underline the position of the space within a wider urban discourse. When not used for crowd-pulling events, the ideal image of the piazza was a space populated by tourists and decorous Neapolitans. In contrast to the deserted scenes of postcards, photographs in the press often showed small groups of tourists or "*napoletani*" either strolling or staring at the monuments and temporary works of art. A common claim was made that the piazza was otherwise "empty" and its 'reanimation' was therefore considered a pressing issue. A local

journalist for *la Repubblica* wrote in March 1999 that without the tourist and cultural services under the colonnade, Piazza Plebiscito would continue to be "just a window display and a *piazza di bandiera* (piazza of official cerimonies)". With the official announcement of long-awaited measures, she asked:

> "will the piazza finally be used as something more than just a place for tourist pilgrimages and the evening and Sunday strolls of Neapolitans?" (17/3/99)

The journalist suggests that the piazza is only lived in certain moments. The implication is that footballers, *motorini* and loiterers around the colonnade fill the void of an underused piazza. The term 'empty' is therefore not so much a description as an expression of values regarding the use and meaning of urban space.

Used critically at a conceptual level, the notion of emptiness might have some urban or political sense. For instance, the urbanist Daniela Lepore saw the 'emptying process' as one of the unconvincing aspects of the Bassolino agenda.

> "Clearly this De Chirico-style scene..is more pleasant than the former shapeless expanse of metal shells. However, the construction of voids continues to strike me as a miserable, uninteresting goal which would be dangerous if it turned into a *model*" (Lepore 1995: 31).

However, for an ethnographic reading of the lived space of the piazza, emptiness remains a highly misleading and problematic concept. Even if it is placed out of bounds by forms of control, as was the case with Piazza Plebiscito during the G7 summit, urban space is always replete with contrasting representations. The first part of this chapter examines the daily activities in the pedestrianized Piazza Plebiscito, prior to drawing on interviews with promoters and users to analyse different situated readings of the space. A detailed picture of the piazza was constructed through an extensive period of systematic observation between October 1998 and November 1999 (for an explanation of this fieldwork and samples of mapped activities see appendix).

This 'everyday map' of the piazza commences with a summary of the physical space. The piazza possesses no facilities. There are no benches, rubbish bins or public toilets. 'Sittable' space is located on the edges of the piazza: the steps of the colonnade, the stone ledges along the façade of the Palazzo Reale and the bollards and chains in front of the prefecture and Palazzo Salerno which close the piazza off from passing traffic.

The centre of the piazza and the pedestrianized street in front of the Royal Palace were generally clean and tidy. The colonnade and the adjacent area were more unkempt, although this was not apparent to somebody standing on the Royal Palace side of the piazza. During the summer, tufts of grass appeared on the steps and on the semicircle in front of the colonnade. The ground was often strewn with litter and in certain parts, particularly on the steps and under the colonnade itself, there were distinct traces of human urine and pigeon and dog excrement. This area of the piazza was at its cleanest in the early morning (between 8.30 and 10.00) after the street cleaners had passed. Only three of the workshop spaces under the colonnade at the time were occupied: a photographic archive-cum-exhibition space, a tailors and an old foundry which was used as an office and occasional art gallery. Most of the other vacant spaces were in a state of disrepair with broken doors and boarded-up windows. On two occasions during the morning, abandoned matresses and blankets were spotted in the door wells. The columns of the colonnade and plinths of the equestrian statues were covered in graffiti. This consisted mainly of football related matter (which were the most elaborated and noticeable[20]), swollen genitalia, personal and gang messages (for instance "we are the untouchables..by 4H Minzoni, Giugliano (Naples)") and amorous declarations (such as "Roberta and Daniele love each other"), although there were a few hammer and sickles and celtic crosses [**figs. 2.18a. & 2.18b.**]. Two points can here be inferred: firstly that tarrying was more likely to occur on the piazza's perimeter where it was possible to sit, and secondly, that the colonnade appeared more 'used' than other parts. The piazza was in the same general state when last observed in June 2001, although the former foundry had been closed down and two council activities had been opened up on the northern half of the colonnade which had acquired a more salubrious aspect.

The amount of people either crossing or in the piazza was dependent on the time of day and year as well as the weather. Throughout the day, the closed street in front of the Royal Palace was a transit point between the city's commercial and administrative district and Santa Lucia. The number of passers-by increased during peak periods (early morning, lunch time and at the end of work) and decreased with rain and during the summer months. This street was often used by police cars (which never appeared to be

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[20] For instance, the plinth of one of the equestrian statues was (and still is) emblazoned with the giant letters "JUVE" accompanied with a championship shield. The columns in front of the basilica included the list of the full 1998-99 AC Milan squad and a figurative illustration of an Alessandro del Piero goal.

in an emergency) despite the official ban on all vehicles (De Lucia 1998: 19). Mopeds and motorbikes crossed the piazza primarily in front of the colonnade at all times of the day, with a peak in the late afternoon and early evening[21].

The piazza was at its busiest during special occasions (epiphany and carnival) and organized events (the inauguration of art installations and the annual street marathon which finished in front of the Royal Palace). However, apart from the New Year's Eve celebrations, crowds were located in specific areas (for example around the finishing line of the marathon). At other times, the piazza was used most regularly as a recreational or meeting place. By far the most frequent and visible recreational activity was football. This would be played daily, particularly from the afternoon through to early evening and during weekends and school holidays. Players were predominantly male of primary or secondary school age, although in the evening young men would sometimes organize a game. Nearly every player spoke in Neapolitan dialect and most would enter and leave the piazza by the colonnade; in other words from the side of the Spanish Quarters and the Pallonetto. Matches would be disputed in all parts of the piazza, but in particular around the statues or under the colonnade in front of the entrance to San Francesco di Paola which was also the only space to be used in bad weather. Often, three or four matches (and occasionally more) would take place contemporaneously. The few objects in the piazza – the chains, the bollards, the church door, the equestrian statues – would be appropriated as goal posts or would mark out pitch boundaries. Children would often climb onto the railings surrounding the equestrian statues and sometimes on the plinths in order to watch the football matches. The piazza was less frequently used for non-football recreational activities. One notable exception was the evening of Epiphany when young children descended on the piazza to play with their new toys. Many were accompanied by parents and entered the piazza from Piazza Trieste e Trento. Generally, two distinguishable types of children were identifiable: on the one hand regularly present unaccompanied, dialect speaking locals, on the other hand Italian speaking, non-locals accompanied by adults who were mostly present during special occasions or on Sunday afternoons.

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[21] For example, on 11/6/99 between 15.45 and 16.15, thirty-three mopeds and motorbikes were counted crossing the piazza including one policeman and one *falco* (member of a plain clothes anti-crime squad). Although on most occasions over half the riders were young and male, a sizeable proportion were female or over 40 years old. It was not an uncommon sight to see three or four people on the same moped.

The main meeting places were in areas adjacent to Piazza Plebiscito: Piazza Carolina where young people would regularly congregate in the evening, and Piazza Trieste e Trento where throughout the day tourists and shoppers gathered outside the bars. However, various small groups of people would meet on the steps of the colonnade. From the spring onwards, local mothers with small children would meet every afternoon in the same spot on the unshaded side of the colonnade close to Piazza Carolina. Smaller groups of teenagers (some of whom smoked marijuana) and young couples would meet on both sides of the basilica from the mid-afternoon through to the middle of the night in all weather conditions (unless particularly cold). In all cases, many would arrive at meeting places on mopeds.

Tourists were a minor presence and were more visible during the morning when the piazza was much quieter. All Italian and foreign tourists entered the piazza from Piazza Trieste e Trento but less than half actually crossed it to visit the basilica and almost all would spend no more than fifteen minutes in the piazza. The majority would come in small groups of two to four people. Large (school or pensioner) parties were observed on only three occasions. Of the few people who looked at Robert Rauschenberg's "Banners", on show along the colonnade between April and September 1999, most were tourists. However, overall, the piazza did not appear to be a popular attraction for visitors.

The largest groups present in the piazza were the protesters (unemployed, evicted occupants of council houses from Neapolitan suburbs and immigrants) who, on six occasions, assembled during the day in front of the prefecture, although they never numbered more than a hundred individuals. Demonstrations would last between one and two hours and would then move on to other destinations: either the town hall in Piazza Municipio or the seat of the regional government in Via Santa Lucia. On each occasion there was a large police presence and the road in front of the prefecture was temporarily closed to traffic. However, the protests would never arouse the attention of the other users (the mothers and footballers), which perhaps suggests that they were an integral element of the everyday life of the piazza. After protesters moved on, the ground would be littered with picnic material such as plastic cups and sandwich wrappers but very rarely with political leaflets.

Seven different itinerant vendors of drinks, balloons and tourist prints and two immigrant traders selling baseball caps and sunglasses were observed during the spring and summer. Apart from one *granita* (crushed-ice drink) seller who was permanently positioned on the Piazza Carolina edge of the colonnade, the others did not remain in the piazza for more than ten minutes. Given the lack of people in the centre and in front of the Royal Palace, one can assume that the piazza was not a particularly lucrative pitch. Other common activities included people walking their dogs (and on four occasions strays were spotted wandering in the piazza), wedding ceremonies in the basilica (on which occasion a red carpet was laid on the main steps) and, on five occasions, photographers taking pictures of newly-wedded couples in various parts of the piazza.

There was little visible evidence of effective policing in the piazza apart from during the demonstrations in which case the clear aim was to maintain public order and protect the prefecture. A mobile *carabiniere* (military police) unit was often parked in the adjacent Piazza Trieste e Trento which carried out spot checks on motorists and motorcyclists. The gap between the bollards near the colonnade used by mopeds to enter the piazza was blocked just twice by *vigili urbani* (municipal police). On three other occasions police crossing the piazza on motorbikes made detours to evict offenders but as soon as they left the scene, the mopeds reappeared.

Through systematic observation, a significantly different picture of Piazza Plebiscito emerges to the one in orthodox descriptions. The piazza possesses none of the basic amenities – benches, toilets, litter bins – which are considered necessary prerequisites for 'successful' public space (Whyte 1980; Hass-Klau et al. 1999). But the piazza was not 'empty'. Admittedly, it did look rather barren on first inspection and at certain points of the day was literally deserted, but it was nevertheless constituted by multiple routines and uses which have been excluded from official representations of the space. The pedestrianization enabled unforeseen activities which perhaps clashed with the prescribed image of the piazza but did not seem, from the vantage point of the observer, to be in conflict. Representations of the everyday piazza in regenerational narratives were either imagined, suppressed or simply considered irrelevant. This was particularly evident in the case of the local press where one would have expected a more attentive

interest in the daily collective uses of the new car-free piazza. Instead, the media's portrayal of Piazza Plebiscito and its coverage of connected events were largely framed by the definitions of the piazza formulated and espoused by the administration. Superintendency and recognized experts such as architectural historians. These were what Hall et al. term "primary definers": people in powerful, influential or high-status positions whose interpretations of topics "command the field" (1978: 58). Voices of dissent or alternative opinions ("secondary definers") were occasionally reported to dramatize and enhance the newsworthiness of certain events (as in the case of the protesting shopkeepers during the closure of the piazza after the G7 summit) but these counter-arguments inserted themselves into a pre-established framework of debate which acknowledged the symbolic and material importance of the piazza.

> "The primary definition sets the limit for all subsequent discussion by framing what the problem is. This initial framework then provides the criteria by which all subsequent contributions are labelled as 'relevant' to the debate, or 'irrelevant' – beside the point. Contributions which stray from this framework are exposed to the charge that 'they are not addressing the problem'." (Hall et al. 1978: 59)

Daily events and spatial practices which were situated outside the dominant interpretative framework only became newsworthy when they disrupted the consensual map of meaning (such as the 'motorbike races'), otherwise they largely remained extraneous to public discussions about the piazza.

2.18a. The colonnade, January 2001

2.18b. Graffiti on plinth of equestrian statue, January 2001

6.2 The multi-layered experiences of Piazza Plebiscito

In order to develop this initial stage of fieldwork and examine the ways in which the piazza has been experienced, thirty-two in-depth and short interviews were conducted between December 1998 and August 1999 with promoters and opponents of the new Piazza Plebiscito as well as daily users (for discussion of approach and full list of interviewees see appendix). The aim was to gather and examine a range of perspectives and spatial relationships. I focused on three general groups: promoters and opponents of the new Piazza Plebiscito who had a public link with the piazza through their work (in the council, prefecture and Superintendency) but who did not use it on a daily basis, non-locals who had a daily connection with the piazza through their work under the colonnade, and local users of the piazza who lived in the surrounding neighbourhoods. These interviews were all carried out *in situ*, either in the piazza itself or in workplaces nearby. For reasons of space, I have chosen to concentrate on four interviews: a joint interview with two council employees of the '*Osservatorio Turistico Culturale*' in the Royal Palace (which in 2000 moved to a space under the colonnade), two separate interviews with the custodian and parish priest of San Francesco di Paola, and a *granita* seller from the Spanish Quarters. The analysis of each interview follows the same basic structure. The first part examines readings of the new piazza and definitions of it as a public place, while the second part looks at notions of decorum and control in relation to the space. The respondents have not been selected as representative of the three groups but they do highlight a series of common attitudes. I have nevertheless had to sacrifice a lot of rich material, although some references are made to other informants where comparisons are particularly appropriate.

Franca Pastore, 50, and Gaetano Santucci, 40, both worked for the 'tourist observatory' run by the city council. Their principle role was to monitor cultural activities in the city, although following a rise in tourism after the G7, their office had begun to function as a subsidiary public information service[22]. Franca Pastore, who had worked in the tourist sector for ten years, had coordinated foreign affairs during the left-wing Valenzi administration, while Gaetano Santucci had been actively involved in a local environmental organization for over fifteen years. The interview was dominated by

[22] The main tourist information office is located in Piazza Gesù Nuovo in the *centro antico*.

Santucci. Pastore would often interrupt to express her agreement or add emphasis to Santucci's discussion of the piazza. She did, however, speak at length over issues of safety and control which are outlined below.

Santucci was one of only two respondents to speak in any detail about the 'old' Piazza Plebiscito. He recounts his personal experiences of the piazza before the car park:

> "About thirty five years ago, when I was young, it was the place where mums would bring their children to play and feed the pigeons, as happens in Venice today. There were these old guys who sold maize which we would buy and give to the pigeons. It was a place to bring children into close contact with nature. In 1964, 1965 there weren't many cars. It was before the boom. There was however this enormous bus park, but in the empty spaces there were the meeting places for children, the maize sellers and the passing tourist. There was the traditional photograph of children on the backs of the lions [statues located at the end of the colonnade]. All of us Neapolitan children would have our photo taken,..in the beautiful piazza, perhaps the largest piazza in Europe, certainly after San Pietro [in Rome]. Then there were the balloon sellers. I'd come here on a Sunday, eat an icecream, and get a coloured balloon on the end of an elastic band...In 1965 the *motorino* and the car didn't pose any danger. Few had cars. Back then there was more respect for the highway code and so it wasn't dangerous to play in the streets."

This personalized account – punctuated by 'objective' historical facts and dates (the boom) – reveals more than just nostalgia for a traffic-free environment. The piazza reflected a more harmonious world where children intermingled with street traders, nature, the monument (the lions) and even vehicles (buses). "Us Neapolitan children" suggests a sense of collectiveness. Venice is used as a positive urban trope to link this image with the present, while the lower quantity of traffic and the greater respect for the highway code distances it from contemporary Naples. Significantly, the rest of Santucci's discussion of Piazza Plebiscito does not draw on first-hand experiences. The car-park period is evoked through a completely detached, political discourse. The LTR fiasco represented the "many failed promises" and the rampant corruption of the pre-Bassolino era, while the chaos of the car park was believed to encourage illicit activities such as the selling of contraband cigarettes. The transformation of Piazza Plebiscito is similarly discussed at an impersonal level. The restoration and closure to traffic is read as a political and historical event which was the combined result of a particular occasion (the G7), a growing awareness over environmental issues and an intelligent administration. The latter's decision to maintain the closure after the G7 summit is considered a radical and courageous gesture:

"The administration is far more advanced than its own citizens. If the citizens are not at the level of who governs then it becomes difficult to govern. If a bus passes then a hundred cars will follow it. What I want to stress is that you need to consider Naples as if it were a bit like Venice. Would you ever be able to go by *motorino* in a canal? Think of Piazza Plebiscito as a beautiful canal."

Piazza Plebiscito is used as a metaphor for the city's transformation. The unwitting "citizens" need to be nurtured and constrained into recognizing the benefit of this change. Venice not only represents the ultimate car-free city (although submerged in water, the piazza would resemble a lake!) but is deployed to underline the irreversibility and incontrovertibility of the piazza's new arrangement. Santucci emphasises the importance of the cleared space:

"The empty space is integral to its beauty. You don't have to necessarily fill something for it to be beautiful or reused. You might obscure the beauty with something else..It can be used as a container which has sometimes been the case: *La Montagna del Sale*, now you'll find the Banners of May, then there's New Year's Eve and so on. But the beauty of the space must be kept to respect its artistic and historical elements. This is a military piazza, in other words an empty space which would be filled up by the army or with royal events such as the *Cuccagna*. But these were ephemeral and not static moments."

The removal of traffic – as the previous *permanent* function – and the temporary public events represent a recuperation of the past. It is the open space, rather than the buildings themselves, which is considered most significant. Acknowledging the piazza's ubiquitous use as a symbol of urban revival, Santucci points out: "You'll find the symbol everywhere. Everybody's used it, even if the church isn't beautiful and not much in terms of art." Although the vast, empty piazza is principally a monumental space, it nonetheless possesses a more explicitly public dimension. Santucci uses Bar Gambrinus (whose entrance is actually located on Piazza Trieste e Trento) to back this argument:

"It is a civic piazza, but you can't see this because it is too big. Perhaps you see it on its margins..When we meet up at Bar Gambrinus, which is a point of reference for Neapolitans, we have a coffee and then go for a stroll in Piazza Plebiscito where we continue to discuss our problems...It's true that Gambrinus is exclusive for those who go there everyday but you get the family who comes every Sunday and sits down all the same [note: for the most expensive coffee in the city]. It becomes the treat after a week's work and perhaps people come only on Sundays because they haven't got the time or because they come from the suburbs or provinces."

A generalized 'we' and the imagined user are combined to form a discourse about the 'civic' piazza. This aspect is delimited spatially and temporally. 'Uses' are confined to

the edges while the centre of the piazza is a space principally traversed. Sunday is the day when the piazza is at its busiest which is reiterated by Franca Pastore. Nevertheless, it is this "reappropriation of the piazza" (Santucci) which renders the piazza 'Neapolitan'. Therefore, according to Santucci, tourists are the indirect beneficiaries of the new piazza:

"A space becomes pleasant and usable when it has been reappropriated by its citizens. This has to be the first step before it can become a tourist space..Tourism today demands a convivial relationship with citizens. You would never go to a place where people are unfriendly. In Piazza Plebiscito you find the conviviality of Neapolitans because *they are there*. Piazza Plebiscito is not part of an exclusive tourist itinerary. It's an itinerary for Neapolitans where tourists also go to find Neapolitans."

Convivial Neapolitans are on display in the piazza. This suggestion is reminiscent of the media representation of Piazza Pebiscito as a '*biglietto da visita*'. What is usually used as a rhetorical device to promote a new Naples is inserted into a discourse about citizenship. The piazza is not simply an emblem, but a place where Neapolitans and tourists can interact.

A common set of positive functions are identified by promoters as the confirmation of collective participation: art, culture and the *passeggiata*. There is less general agreement over what constitutes a threat to Piazza Plebiscito. The architect at the Superintendency, for instance, would like to see street traders banned from the piazza, while Santucci considers the traditional Neapolitan '*abusivi*' an authentic part of local popular culture:

"They're well regarded, they're photographed. Perhaps nobody buys the icecream because they don't know where it's been. But anyway it's a part of Naples which still isn't false and so it's tolerated. This space is surrounded by the Spanish Quarters where people invent a day's pay."

This is the only moment when reference is made to the particular social dimension in the surrounding area. The presence of the local street trader in the piazza is tolerated as an acceptable 'other'. Football and the demonstrations are considered inevitable consequences of the pedestrianization. Santucci prefers "the shouts of children to the noise of cars". It is understandable that without available space in the *centro storico* the piazza should be used for such recreational activities. The "invasion of *motorini*", on the other hand, is firmly condemned as an unjustifiable act of deviance which violates the piazza`s new traffic-free, cultural status. Both would be very severe with offenders: "I`d

confiscate the *motorino*" (Santucci) "I'd put a point on their licence" (Pastore). The present policing in the piazza is considered inadequate, but both stress the importance of education. According to Santucci,

"The only problem is the lack of surveillance by the *vigili urbani* and the *motorini* which shoot past. Would you ever cross? What we need are educational projects; a respect of rules starting from the streets. An educated person would never go through a no entry sign, even if it meant a diversion of an extra kilometre."

Franca Pastore believes that certain people need to "learn to reappropriate the piazza". On the only occasion that either of them allude to personal experience in the new piazza, she recounts the moment she decided to call the police:

"A few weeks ago I had to personally call the police because there were children playing and motorbikes were continually crossing. At that moment all the police were engaged elsewhere [sarcastic laugh] because of *Maggio dei Monumenti*. So I called the *carabinieri* who, I must say, arrived immediately, organized blocks, and remained for the rest of the day..More surveillance is certainly needed but we have to think about re-education. With the present state of affairs the problems will never be solved because wherever a *vigile* is missing they'll find a way of doing something illegal."

The local *vigile* is considered less efficient and competent than the national (and military) *carabiniere*[23]. Neapolitans are no longer conceived as a homogenous public. The positive portrayal of citizens as civic and friendly is pitted against the anti-social behaviour of motorcyclists. The words "they'll find a way" suggest the presence of a persistent abject element among the piazza's users which will not be eradicated by increased controls.

The priest and custodian of San Francesco di Paola were interviewed on separate occasions inside the basilica. The custodian lived in the middle-class residential district of Vomero and had worked for the church on a voluntary basis for six years. Padre Cozza had been the parish priest for the last five and a half years. In both interviews, discussion about the piazza revolved almost entirely around the basilica and the colonnade. The custodian is ambivalent about the basilica`s central position in recent representations of the piazza:

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[23] This distinction between levels of policing is made by a number of respondents and is emphasised during an interview with the *carabinieri* in Piazza Trieste e Trento.

"The piazza was cleared so the church was made to stand out. After the G7, television crews came from all over the world. They noticed this jewel..The piazza is more beautiful, people can enjoy it more. With the cars you couldn't see it..But it is a question of image and little else. There have been no advantages for the church. There has been a greater flow of tourists but Mass hasn't changed – it's still a normal parish. Certainly for me, as a Neapolitan, its pleasing because I am really in love with this church..This is one of the best examples of neo-classicism not only in Naples but in the whole of Italy. It was the last gift which the Bourbons gave to this city. Since then nothing else has been done."

The custodian does not refer in any detail to the public debate about the new piazza. The G7 is mentioned in passing as the turning point in the piazza's fortunes. However, the claim that it is just a "question of image" suggests an acknowledgement of an official discourse about the piazza's transformation. By alluding to the achievements of a distant past (the Bourbons), he further downplays the significance of the change. Nevertheless, he is pleased that the closure to traffic has attracted more visitors to the church, later explaining that he enjoys giving information to visitors (in doing he is able to use his French and English). His intimate relationship and professed fondness for the church contrasts to Santucci who considered the building more of a backdrop to the new pedestrianized zone. According to the custodian, the piazza itself is not a lively public space:

"It has not been a centre of attraction. It's a passing place..It's not like for example Piazza Maggiore in Bologna. The life of the city does not take place here. There are other piazzas. In Vomero, people gather in Piazza Vanvitelli."

Bologna is used as an urban frame, in a similar way to Santucci's use of Venice, but here the comparison is used to distance the piazza (but not the city) from a particular image of public space: the busy central piazza of a Northern Italian city. Padre Cozza is reticent to acknowledge any meaningful relationship with either the church or the piazza (he is the only informant who refused to be tape-recorded):

"I'm here now but I might be told to leave any moment. I must follow what my superiors say. The church isn't important. It's not mine."

While he welcomes the piazza's pedestrianization, he believes the council should be more flexibile in the event of weddings:

"The bride and groom can't enter in a car..This limits the joy of the happiest day of their lives. Cars sometimes get informal permits. It depends on the *vigile urbano*: some are more lenient than others. The bishop made a special request to the council but it`s been five years that we`ve

been waiting for an answer. The council should be more responsible. When a couple has to go to sign a document in Piazza Municipio, they have to walk."

The council is represented as distant and not in tune with people's desires (which here involves the use of the car). The custodian and Padre Cozza are both unenthusiastic about the organized events in the piazza. Without ever referring to any particular public figure, they complain that the church is never involved in the organization and thus can do nothing to prevent the damage which occurs to the building.

"The council is its own boss. They even send lorries and cranes to set up the fireworks which ruin the asphalt surface [of the roof]. Then it's left to us to go up and clean away the debris. They know that we won't let them come through the church, so they mount them from outside." (Custodian)

"The council should show more respect for the church and ask its permission. But the colonnade doesn't belong to the church [but to the state]. People living on Largo Carolina asked me to complain about the launching of fireworks from the roof but what can I do?" (Padre Cozza)

The works of public art are similarly perceived as foreign artefacts which are erected without any consultation. The custodian sees them as spoiling the overall effect of the monument:

"I'm no expert and don't want to make a judgement. But I don't like them. I think this mixture of art from two periods leaves a jarring effect. Placing Paladino's horses between the two horses, which are by Canova, produces an unpleasant work."

The custodian and Padre Cozza demonstrate first-hand knowledge of the piazza's daily activities. Both claim that football had always been played around the colonnade and that, with the closure to traffic, this had merely spread across the piazza. Padre Cozza thinks that some children can be a nuisance but they do not pose any real problem:

"They always play in front of the church, pounding the ball against the door. I can't tell them not to play when the church is closed. It's another matter when the church is open. Children are children. You get the hot-headed ones."

The occupation of the basilica by unemployed protesters is remembered as a regrettable moment, but neither attribute any particular significance to the occasion nor do they express any animosity towards the protesters. Padre Cozza recounts:

"It was a sad event. I can't remember exactly when it happened. It must have been winter because they complained about the cold. They damaged the plaster. they smoked, they made lots of noise, a few who were afraid of God kept quiet..It's logical that they have to protest..But what's the church got to do with it? We can try to help them..But I don't think that the symbolic aspect of the piazza played a part..It was a decision taken on the spur of the moment. They came here because there was the prefecture but they've never come back."

The priest designifies an event which was publicly interpreted as a contestation of the piazza's symbolic meaning by distancing the church from the debate about the piazza. The church as an institution can try to help the needy, but the basilica itself is insignificant.

As with the other users of the colonnade, the two of them elaborate on the rubbish, excrement and acts perceived as deviant around the basilica end of the piazza. Interestingly, they do not refer at all to the *motorini*. It would appear that the condition of colonnade is a more pressing issue than the frequent infractions of motorcyclists. The employees of the tourist observatory, surprisingly perhaps, hardly touched the matter of dirt which suggested both a physical distance and a concern for more symbolically related issues (although this would probably be different today now that their office has moved under the colonnade). In a different way to Santucci and Pastore, the custodian stresses the need for more surveillance:

"There's no surveillance. People write on the walls and urinate. If there were surveillance, the monument would be in a better condition..They pass by in the morning to clean but then the tourists are not very disciplined. When there's less traffic, there's less rubbish, also because in planning the piazza's new arrangement they did not provide for rubbish carts. So without an appropriate place, the tourists leave their stuff here under the colonnade…I've heard talk about this plan for art boutiques. Certainly afer 6pm in the autumn and winter there's no activity. And so it becomes the realm of these lot who smoke joints. The boutiques would bring activity which would be a positive thing."

Attitudes about decorum reiterate an apparent disregard for a regenerational narrative about the piazza. Tourists are messier than local users (the custodian claims that 70% of the graffiti is by people from outside Naples). The area needs rubbish carts but these, as the architect at the Superintendency responsible for the piazza confirmed, were removed by the Superintendency for aesthetic reasons. One can infer that while such carts have a practical use for those under the colonnade, they represent an eyesore for those who admire the basilica from the opposite side of the piazza.

The interview with Salvatore, a thirty-five-year-old resident of the nearby Spanish Quarters who sold *granite* in Piazza Plebiscito, took place on his pitch at the end of the colonnade by Piazza Carolina. He had done this "*mestiere*" (profession) every spring and summer in the same place for the last twelve years. As with other local users, remarks about the car-park period are pithy but not categorically negative. He does not mention the traffic but he remembers the fountain erected in 1985:

"After the earthquake they put up this fountain and it was beautiful because it attracted an enormous amount of people. Then they removed it because original bits were missing and it looked shabby"

No direct reference is made to the public debate over the transformation of the piazza, or to the plans for the colonnade (despite the fact that he was interviewed in this area of the piazza). Salvatore's initial description of the piazza betrays a disregard for its newly forged reputation. Pointing across the piazza at Vesuvius on the horizon, he explains:

"There are two other *granite* sellers; one on the corner of the road, over there by the 'postcard', the bit where you can see Naples and the Gulf. We call it the 'postcard' because in the background you can see the Gulf of Naples."

Natural objects, acknowledged as emblematic of Naples, are used to frame the piazza. The symbolic lies *beyond*. Nevertheless, the new arrangement is enthusiatically endorsed and is used to point to some general improvements in the city:

"The piazza has changed enormously, from 'the stables to the stars'. I think this piazza is beautiful, there's people, you're unlikely to see rows or fights, what else would you want? Our mayor Bassolino hasn't just stopped in the piazza. He's done other things like [pedestrianizing] Santa Lucia. Yes some wrong things but ninety per cent has been a good job. Politically I'm neither communist nor fascist but I see that he's done some great things. Before the buses never passed now they come by every five minutes. You never hear about robberies here or in Via Roma or Via Chiaia. After all, these are controlled areas. That's what I mean: this is the façade and its beautiful, but if you go 100 metres from here and climb towards Sant'Anna di Palazzo, the whole lifestyle changes. In the Spanish Quarters there's the Camorra but we live well because we help each other out..but as Neapolitan people that's what we're like."

Where there was once a shabby fountain, there is now a pleasant public place. As with the fountain, "beauty" is evaluated in terms of the piazza's social function rather than its architectural or monumental form. Salvatore draws on the common representation of Piazza Plebiscito as a signifier of urban change, but by underlining its proximity to the

different reality of his own neighbourhood, he delimits any meaning to the physical space. Bassolino did not just stop *in* Piazza Plebiscito but moved on to another place, Santa Lucia. But these achievements are confined to particular areas.

However, he stresses that the car-free piazza has become a recreational and meeting place for the surrounding neighbourhoods. Through his local roots and his daily presence in the piazza, Salvatore claims to personally know most of the children and women who play and sit around the colonnade. Besides offering refreshments, he stresses the social services which he additionally provides: litter collection in the immediate vicinity and first-aid assistance (that week he had already attended to two children who had hurt themselves playing football). When describing the piazza, he assumes the role of a local, knowledgeable guide:

"Right, let me explain you something. This is a piazza which is frequented a lot by the *popolino* because we've got the Spanish Quarters stuck on right here and that's almost 30,000 people..Then there's the Pallonetto, Santa Lucia. For the children it's the only piazza where they can come down and feel a bit more free. Not many *motorini* come past, there are no cars…In the mornings during this period [June], 90% of the mums from the [Spanish] Quarters and the Pallonetto go to the gardens in the Palazzo Reale where it's shady and fresher. In the afternoon they all come over here."

Salvatore maps a different time-space relationship to the one indicated by Santucci and Pastore. Activity is concentrated around the colonnade which builds up in the afternoon. The area is at its busiest in the evening but at this point most of the (young) people are concentrated in the adjacent and much smaller Piazza Carolina:

"The piazza is much smaller but entering it there's more of an impact. The kids go there to show off their Dolce Gabbana [etc]..You can't enter with the *motorino*, you can't stop in the car. Now everybody from the [Spanish] Quarters meets up in Piazza Carolina – including us football fans. Every Saturday it bursts with people. On some occasions there's been more than two thousand of us in that piazzetta."

Salvatore describes 'Piazzetta' Carolina, architecturally non-descript and traversed by traffic, as a more vibrant, intimate space. It is also more closely bound to personal memory: this was where he and fellow fans celebrated the *scudetto* victory of 1987.

Officially promoted functions of the piazza are reinterpreted or simply not recognized. Salvatore never mentions the *passeggiata*. By 'occupying' the piazza, the whole notion

of 'strolling' is undermined. As with other local respondents, Salvatore only refers to the public art when directly asked for an opinion:

"[And the art?] yes very nice. Look, at night the piazza is much more beautiful. At night there are loads of people in the piazza drinking and listening to music. The piazza, illuminated with these paintings here [Rauschenberg's "Banners"], gives off a special effect."

The response, which cannot be used to infer any particular reading of the piazza's installations, seems to suggest that art is appreciated as a backdrop to the piazza's function as a social space. Meanwhile, tourists have provided him with a new clientele:

"When tourists come with their expensive watches, we tell them: "look remove it, because they are eying you up". Many come to me because apart from doing fresh orange and lemon juice, I'm the only one of the three who speaks a bit of English. I can get by in Spanish too. In Naples we have a lot of imagination when it comes to selling, a will to live and not to do the same thing three times. So you explain a bit about the piazza. For the granita you ask 2,000 lire but they can give you five, ten thousand lire depending on your imagination. We try to talk."

Salvatore renegotiates ideas about conviviality and Neapolitanness into a way of earning money. The acknowledgement of a general discourse about decorum is further reiterated by numerous references to cleanliness. He claims to do his own bit by keeping his patch tidy: "They've complained a lot. We've changed a lot. Don't throw things on the ground, try to be cleaner." What is deemed unacceptable behaviour in the piazza – robbery and violence – is also unacceptable everywhere else. The size and visibilty of the space gives certain acts a heightened impact. For instance, he recounts the time he intervened to stop a pensioner stabbing his two-timing wife: "it was the middle of the day and the two of them were down there in the middle of the piazza, and we were all up here, and nobody would go to help her." Otherwise, there are no inappropriate uses specific to Piazza Plebiscito. Football is not simply an "inevitable consequence" of pedestrianization, but the piazza's principal daytime use. "Some of the children are even good players, they've got talent." The smoking of hashish in the piazza is also considered 'normal':

"Lots of hasish is smoked in the piazza. I smoke as well, what's the problem? Now it's become a really normal thing to do. You get children as young as fourteen who stop to smoke. It's a piazza where it's smoked loads and loads and loads..But dope isn't sold here..Probably someone will come by on a *motorino*..Basically you role the joint in the piazza because it is more covered and the police car can't pass by. You can enter only from the sides. You've got enough time to see them. At worst, you leave it on the ground and go back later...But it's like Amsterdam here. By law it isn't legalized but the way we smoke it's as if it were."

What is seen as an illicit activity by the custodian, is considered by Salvatore an entirely acceptable social activity, even though it is formally illegal. Once again, an urban trope is used to frame representations of Naples. In this case Amsterdam signifies the free, tolerant city. In the evening Piazza Plebiscito offers a sheltered space to role and smoke joints. During the day he maintains a good rapport with the *vigili*, many of whom, like himself, are from the Spanish Quarters.

> "The *vigili urbani* should be stricter with us because we haven't got any licence. We're *abusivi* [illegal]. But they leave us to work because they understand our situation. If we don't do this what would we do? In Naples 60% of work is illegal..At most they come to us and politely tell us "move on, you can't stay here". Sometimes you get the *vigile* who threatens you but that's rare..They've never taken my cart, I've never had a fine because, as I said, even the *vigili urbani* know me. We're educated: they see that I keep the piazza tidy. There's my litter bin..These *vigili* are nearly all old, the youngest have done at least ten years' service. Four or five of them are from the Spanish Quarters. They're all very agreeable."

Salvatore conveys a pragmatic attitude towards the question of control in relation to the piazza. While he argues that the aggressive behaviour of young motorcyclists should be stopped by the police, the *motorino* still serves a practical purpose: people can arrive at meeting points (as his friend did during the interview) and marijuana can be delivered. The *vigili* are treated with respect. He claims to be repeatedly let-off (not for being in Piazza Plebiscito but for possessing no licence) because the municipal police, as locals themselves or through their long-term service in the area, empathize with his socio-economic situation.

It is not possible to draw definitive conclusions from these few interviews, even if they are part of a wider cross-section. The aim has not been to provide a 'fuller' or more 'objective' picture of Piazza Plebiscito. However, the responses do indicate the divergent and contradictory ways in which the regeneration of public space has been interpreted. Points of view are constructed around discursive, professional and corporeal relationships with the piazza[24]. Positive readings of its transformation are pronounced by promoters and users alike but through different sorts of interaction with the piazza.

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[24] Overall, responses did not reveal any particular gender-based relationships with the piazza, although women tended to express more concern about pedestrian safety. This would seem to reflect the findings of a study on pedestrian behaviour in European city centres which concluded that males in southern cities were less worried about motorized traffic (Hass-Klau et al. 1999: 125). However, while the mothers from the Pallonetto complained about the young motorcyclists, many themselves arrived in the piazza on *motorini*.

For Salvatore, Piazza Plebiscito is beautiful at night because he can meet up with his friends to have a beer with the Gulf of Naples in the background, while for Franca Pastore, the space is conceived as a place where Neapolitans can come to stroll:

> "Neapolitans like this piazza a lot. They like the idea of being able to stroll from here down to Santa Lucia and the sea. Even the shopkeepers have got used to the idea."

The acknowledgement of the public debate surrounding Piazza Plebiscito also appears to be linked to the type of rapport with the piazza. While Santucci and Pastore deliberate over the context in which the piazza was pedestrianized, the local and non-local users refer briefly to the principle protagonists of the new Piazza Plebiscito – the G7, Bassolino and tourists – in order to articulate their personal experiences of its transformation. The common recognition of the piazza's improvement does not necessarily mean subscribing to official accounts about its change. Discussion of the symbolic significance of the piazza leads Salvatore to indicate the unchanging situation in his own neighbourhood. By acknowledging the new status of the piazza, the custodian and Padre Cozza are able to underline the disadvantages for the church. This reflects an observation made by Phil Hubbard in his study of residents' interpretations of the redevelopment of Birmingham's city centre:

> "Meanings of entrepreneurial landscapes as promoted by local politicians and the media were not accepted unproblematically by all individuals but were internalised differently according to people's positionality within broader structures of social space." (Hubbard 1996: 1458)

The transformation of the piazza is carried out from above and is assigned with, what Lefebvre (1991) defines, a sense of transparency. The pedestrianization is promoted as a 'democratization' of urban space, even though, as the custodian and Padre Cozza complain, there has been little debate or public consultation with some of its established users. For Santucci and Pastore, Piazza Plebiscito is bound to a wider discourse of citizenship. The new piazza represents the reclamation of a public space which benefits 'Neapolitans'. As a generalized, positive construct, the 'Neapolitan' is imagined as a civic-minded, educated, well-behaved (and implicitly middle-class) citizen. Those who do not respect the piazza's traffic-free function go against the collective good. But what emerges most vividly from the period of observation and the interviews in the piazza is not the image of a hermetically sealed tabula rasa from which to project a hegemonic,

civic vision of Naples, but a complex multifunctional social space. Some functions are recent, others are more long-standing. While the piazza had historically been, as Santucci explained, the site of temporary public events, the colonnade had also been traditionally appropriated from below. This side of the piazza did not feature in the accounts of those (mainly public officials) interviewed on the Royal Palace side, unless reference was made to the official plans to 'reanimate' the colonnade. What is also apparent is that Piazza Plebiscito literally sits on the border between two distinct social environments: the administrative, commercial and monumental heart of the city which lies beyond Piazza Trieste e Trento, and the *quartieri popolari* located behind San Francesco di Paola and the Prefecture. The recuperated royal courtyard is simultaneously the backyard for the Pallonetto and Spanish Quarters. The significance of this juxtaposition, almost never raised in dominant representations of the new piazza, is discernible through the different values which are expressed about decorum and appropriate behaviour. For instance, the entrance of *motorini* into Piazza Plebiscito is deemed unacceptable by the promoters of the new piazza as a clear example of incivility. (Unlike Santucci and Pastore, other informants from the first group were more explicit in blaming the '*popolo*' for such acts of recalcitrance.) On the other hand, for Salvatore and other locals from the surrounding neighbourhoods, the motorized relationship with the piazza is endowed with practical significance and is thus perceived as 'normal'.

The pedestrianization has enabled unforseeable and unintended uses and accentuated those which were less visible before. The piazza is read by non-local and local users not as a particular urban discourse but through specific functions: as a parish church, a setting for wedding ceremonies, an informal commercial space or as a place for 'skinning up'. The lived space consciously and unconsciously contests the prescriptions of an official narrative; signalling the emergence of 'counter discourses' which contradict an ideological vision of a new Piazza Plebiscito as a regenerational landscape. This was most blatantly exemplified by the gap between the Superintendents' ban on organized sport and the piazza's daily use as a football pitch.

The findings which have emerged from this fieldwork highlight the limits of fixing closed definitions around 'monumental' urban space. Amalia Signorelli (1996) discovered in her study of the *centro storico* of nearby Pozzuoli (depopulated following

the bradisismic earthquake of 1983) that while former residents commonly acknowledged the beauty of the city's ancient monuments and Roman ruins, these sites were perceived and appropriated in a variety of ways. The different relationships with Piazza Plebiscito can be interpreted through Signorelli's interlinked concepts of '*assegnazione*', '*appropriazione*' and '*appaesemento*' (see chapter 3.2). For Pastore and Santucci, the piazza has been *reassigned* to the city of Naples and its citizens through the removal of traffic and by restoring the space to its former glory. The range of possible and appropriate uses and meanings are subsequently conceived within a discourse about improvements to the built environment. On the other hand, the pedestrianization of Piazza Plebiscito is less significant for Padre Cozza and the custodian. The '*assigned space*' of San Francesco di Paola is the symbolic and material focus of their personal relationships with the piazza. Therefore, in the case of the custodian, it is the church and not the car-free piazza which is declared a source of civic pride. Meanwhile, Salvatore internalizes and reinterprets meanings about the piazza's new arrangment through his physical appropriation of the colonnade and adjacent area. As a tourist attraction, the piazza represents an opportunity to make money, while as a pedestrianized zone, it signifies a leisure space for his fellow residents from the local neighbourhoods.

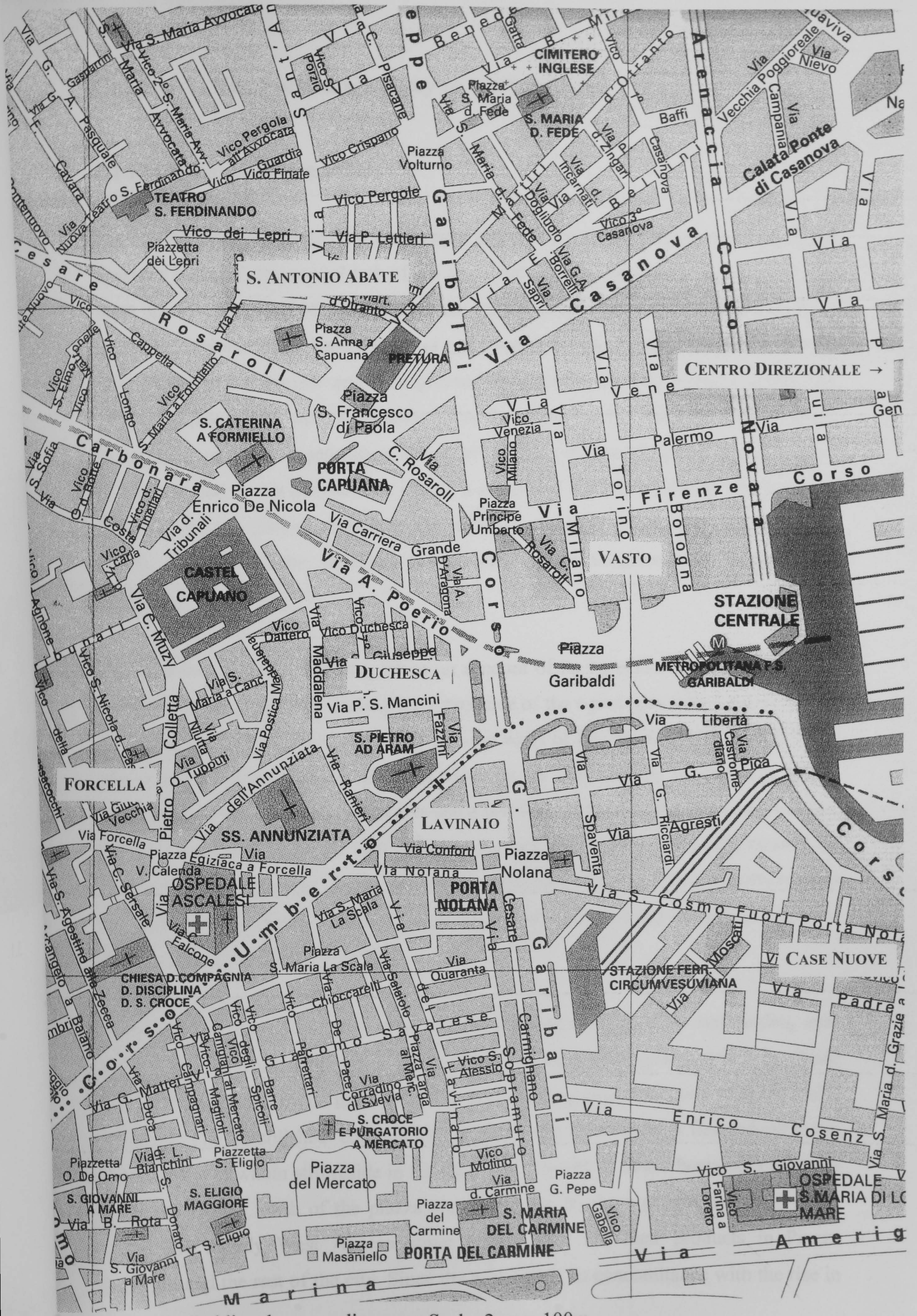
The fact that these multiple meanings and uses should unfold in the '*salotto*' of the 'Neapolitan Renaissance' is perhaps the most telling aspect of urban change in Naples during the 1990s. Drawing on David Sibley's model of spatial organization (Sibley 1995), Piazza Plebiscito can be considered a strongly classified system combined with weak framing. In other words, the conceived piazza is construed through firm notions of decorum, culture, history and transgression which distinguish it from surrounding spaces, while its lived space is characterized by an openness to difference where divergent presences, from the tourist to the scooterist, co-exist. During the G7 summit strong classification was accompanied with strong framing whereby Piazza Plebiscito was physically shielded by security guards and turned into a no-go area. The dystopian vision of the '*città blindata*' is clearly not possible in ordinary circumstances nor was it on the agenda of the local adminstration. However, the proposed 'reanimation' of the piazza, which in 2001 had still not taken place, would inevitably involve '*enclosing*' the space with cultural and tourist functions and increasing police presence. This process is

thwarted by the presence of unusable buildings on the piazza's borders and the fact that the only viable space – the colonnade – has already been independently animated.

The dominant vision of Piazza Plebiscito as a heritage site and urban symbol (discursively) repelled those meanings and uses which were deemed deleterious or disruptive to a new, positive image of Naples. However, attempts to prescribe ideas about decorum and 'appropriate' behaviour onto its lived space were largely ineffective due to the unintended consequences of pedestrianization (which led to the piazza being used, *inter alia*, as an arena of political protest and a giant playground) and due to the piazza's close proximity to two of the poorest neighbourhoods in the *centro storico*. Instead, different voices and alternative viewpoints about Naples continued to exist and resist at the heart of the '*Rinascimento Napoletano*'.

PART 3: PIAZZA GARIBALDI: IMMIGRATION AND CONTESTED USES OF SPACE

3.1. Aerial view of Piazza Garibaldi



3.i. Piazza Garibaldi and surrounding area. Scale: 2cm = 100m

Chapter 7: The Station Gateway to the City 1860-1994

7.1 From piazza to 'giant hole'

Piazza Garibaldi is situated on the eastern edge of the *centro storico* in front of the Stazione Centrale, the central hub of the city's rail and underground network. This vast open space, intersected by a series of main traffic routes, also serves as a terminal for local, regional and international bus and coach services [**fig. 3.1. and map 3.i.**]. With a new emphasis on tourism and a heightened concern for the city's image during the 1990s, the piazza's location at the entrance to the *centro storico* made it a strategic place in debates over urban regeneration. However, whereas Piazza Plebiscito was conceived in political and media discourse as ideally a symbol of the city's cultural 'renaissance', Piazza Garibaldi instead embodied the material problems of the contemporary city: traffic, pollution, crime, marginal groups such as the homeless and, in particular, immigrants.

The piazza is a rather unsettling place on account of its immense size and the chaotic traffic, compounded by the incongruous presence of the squat, sprawling station built at the beginning of the 1960s in front of the neat rows of late nineteenth-century *palazzi*. The space is surrounded on all three sides by an odd mixture of electrical stores, nondescript shops, bars and restaurants and a few famous local 'institutions' such as Bar Mexico, reputed to serve the best coffee in the city. The plethora of hotels situated on the piazza and in adjacent streets are, for the most part, cheap *pensioni* with the notable exceptions of two large, four-star hotels (*Terminus* and *Cavour*) located on opposite sides in front of the railway station.

From the early 1980s onwards, Piazza Garibaldi and its immediate surrounding area became the multifunctional space for a number of immigrant groups drawn by cheap rents and hotels and by its traditional role as a meeting place and point of commercial exchange. The 'established' communities of North and West Africans first arrived in the 1980s, many of whom still reside in the area. The majority of ethnic businesses in Vasto to the immediate north of the piazza are owned run by these groups, some of which supply the mainly West African street traders who sell their products in Piazza Garibaldi and the rest of the city. Since the mid-1990s, in concomitance with the rise in

immigration from Eastern Europe, the piazza has become a meeting place on Thursdays and Sundays for hundreds of Poles and Ukrainians, most of whom are female and work in the domestic sector. More recently, the station area has become a centre of distribution for the Chinese rag trade based in the towns at the foot of Vesuvius and for products imported from the Far East which has resulted in a growing influx of Chinese street traders and workers employed in nearby shops and warehouses. This latest wave adds to a few Chinese-run supermarkets and clothes shops already established in the area.

A focus on debates over the piazza during the Bassolino administration offers a chance to examine the complex and conflictual relationship between immigration and the city and to explore in greater depth the issues which frame the process of regeneration. While the study of Piazza Plebiscito raised issues over contested claims to public space, Piazza Garibaldi can be examined to shed light on the exclusionary foundations of urban renewal and definitions of the 'public'. Until the mid-1990s Piazza Garibaldi was, like Piazza Plebiscito, a peripheral space in local urban debates, despite the fact that it had always been the principal transport hub of modern Naples. This chapter examines the sedimentation of representations of the piazza over the last century to draw out the continuities and contradictions of its repositioning within new narratives about the city.

The origins of Piazza Garibaldi are directly connected with the history of the city's railway system. The first central station, built in a late neoclassical style and flanked by porticoes, was raised following the Unification of Italy[1] on the eastern edge of the city on what was then open marshland [**figs. 3.2a. & 3.2b.**]. This side of the city had historically been the point where the main roads to Rome, Puglia and Calabria converged and, since the end of the eighteenth century, had been the setting for the city's sporadic industrial development. During the 1860s, various plans were drawn up for an extensive neighbourhood of mixed low cost housing and industry in the area which aimed to offer a modern alternative to the densely populated ancient centre. However, the insistence on completing the new terminal thwarted this comprehensive expansion of the city. The station building blocked the principle artery in the area (Via dell'Arenaccia, today Corso Lucci and Corso Novara), while the open fields were

[1] The first station in Naples, opened in 1839, was located directly south of Piazza Garibaldi near to the present Circumvesuviana terminal and served the Naples-Portici-Castellamare line (the first railway in the Italian peninsula).

carved up by an entanglement of railway lines [**map 3.ii.**]. As Lidia Savarese argues in her study of the eastern district of Naples, the station "totally altered the relationship between the nucleus of the city and this extra-urban area, and became the fulcrum of all successive development plans" (1983: 29). Attention instead turned to planning a wide boulevard link between the new station and the administrative centre which would allow for swift transit across the medieval city as well as improve the visual impact on visitors arriving by train. This idea was to later materialize with the massive building programme of the *Risanamento*. In addition to the new thoroughfare, Corso Umberto I or '*il Rettifilo*' (the Straight Line) as it is popularly known, the space in front of the station was turned into an elegant piazza by the demolition of the city walls, while a new neighbourhood, much smaller than originally planned, was built to the immediate north of the station. The piazza, a third of the size of the present Piazza Garibaldi and originally called Piazza dell'Unità Italiana, was arranged around neat gardens and the ornamental 'Partenope' fountain. In 1914 this fountain was replaced by an imposing statue of Giuseppe Garibaldi and the piazza was given its present name.

The location of the central station left a negative legacy on the city's modern development which has preoccupied planners to this day. The 1939 master plan proposed to rebuild the central station two kilometres to the east next to the main north-south line which would have cleared the way for a grand avenue and a radical tertiary development of the eastern periphery. This proposal, abandoned during the reconstruction period of the 1950s, would later be considered one of the greatest missed opportunities in the city's modern history. Giulio De Luca, one of the authors of the 1939 plan, argued that the station's transferal would have prevented the destruction of the city's green belt areas after the Second World War by concentrating building work to one area (De Luca 1987: 30). During the 1980s, a number of architects incorporated the scheme into a series of projects for the modernization of Naples (Alisio et al. 1987) while, more recently, Vezio De Lucia, the planning assessor of the first Bassolino administration, claimed that the essence of the plan influenced the administration's choice of location for the new high-speed train terminal (De Lucia 1998: 51-2).

The project for the new station and the expansion of Piazza Garibaldi at the end of the 1950s was not conceived in terms of encouraging urban expansion but rather stemmed from a series of less ambitious, short-term criteria: to modernize the railway service, to

rejuvenate the immediate surrounding area which had been particularly damaged by Allied bombing during the Second World War, and to deal with road congestion. The old station created a bottleneck for traffic which converged on the miniscule Piazza Garibaldi. A few trains arrived and departed inside the building on four tracks located below street level, but the majority of platforms were situated three hundred metres to the east of the station which rail users had to reach on foot [**fig. 3.3.**]. The government-funded competition, organized in 1954 by the Italian State Railways (*FS*) in agreement with Naples City Council, stipulated that the new terminal be built at the head of these tracks while the other four would be covered over to form a secondary underground station, thus allowing for the enlargement of Piazza Garibaldi. The winning design, which combined the work of three groups that included some of Italy's most renowned architects such as Pier Luigi Nervi and Bruno Zevi, was characterized by a single low roof which covered the atrium of the station, ticket hall and the various passenger services, and a canopied walkway, popularly dubbed the '*proboscide*' (elephant trunk), which linked a row of bus stops in the centre of the piazza. The unusual architectural elements (the '*proboscide*' and the geometric forms on the roof) were counterbalanced by the decision to locate a sixteen floor tower to one side leaving an unimpeded panoramic view of Vesuvius [**fig. 3.4.**]. *FS* officials stressed the technical improvements to the city's road and rail system. At a promotional conference held in May 1960 halfway through construction work, the local *FS* chief, Mario Borriello, promised that "Naples will have the most modern and functional station in Italy and, perhaps, in Europe" (Borriello 1960: 182). The new piazza would feature an efficient rotational traffic system to avoid jams as well as carparks, green areas and a series of subways for pedestrians. "From the top of his pedestal, "Garibaldi" will be able to recognize that the 100 years since his entry into Naples have not passed in vain" (ibid.: 179).

The project was enthusiastically patronized by the Lauro adminstration. During the 1950s it had embarked on a phase of massive building, through which Lauro sought to boost both his personal popularity and local confidence by projecting a rhetorical vision of Naples as the Capital of the South and 'Garden of Europe' (Galasso 1978: 248). Open abuses of planning regulations had opened the way to uncontrolled speculation in new housing on the city outskirts and the construction of various tower blocks in the *centro storico*; one of which at the end of Via Mancini today overlooks Piazza Garibaldi (Dal Piaz 1985). The new station represented a prestigious addition to the modern city

(a plastic model of the project went on public display in the Galleria Umberto I) and was interpreted as an official endorsement of local building programmes. The newspaper *Roma* welcomed the imminent transformation with the front page title: "Another great step towards Naples' revival" (3/3/56). During the weeks prior to the start of work, the paper repeatedly spoke of the "resurrection", "renewal" and "reconstruction" of Naples and referred to the "ingenious" features of the future station and layout of the piazza. In his public speech during the inauguration of demolition work (and after having taken the first symbolic swipe with a pickaxe at the old station), Lauro drew comparison between the new Piazza Garibaldi and the council's (illegal) alterations to Piazza Municipio. The two resystemized piazzas were heralded as the gateways to the city:

> "The new, imposing Piazza della Ferrovia and the renovated piazza Municipio will be the grand receptions for all those who come, by land or sea, to visit our wonderful, welcoming and hospitable city which, with gigantic bounds, has set out on the road to a well-deserved future." (*Roma* 25/3/56)

The collective benefits of the area's modernization were extolled. The assessor for public works, Guido Grimaldi, claimed that by removing the physical barriers imposed by the old building and therefore revolutionizing the experience of train travel, the new station would enable and encourage interaction between Neapolitans and the 'outside world':

> "Every form of control concerning access to the station will be abolished and the abandonment of this police-like system will demonstrate the level of civility that Naples has reached because a city which regards tourism as one of its chief interests wants its people to live in continual and cordial contact with its visitors. Our people has the right to a bright future both for its eminent virtues and past sacrifices and as compensation for the city's recent state of abandonment under local and central authorities." (*Roma* 16/3/56)

The administration's hyperbole was, to a lesser degree, reproduced in tourist publicity at the time:

> "Piazza Garibaldi..is perhaps the best reference point for the traveller about to visit Naples. In place of the old, inconvenient, neoclassical station, a new, more rational and comfortable station has risen which, when finished, will be one of the most beautiful and vast in Italy. Naples will offer the tourist from the moment of arrival a clear example of the extensive urban renewal underway in recent years." (Tornincasa 1960: 25)

For a period following completion of work, guide books paid detailed attention to the new facilities offered by the station and provided a summary of its transformation. *TuttoNapoli* (Fratta et al. 1970) spends two pages listing and explaining the location of the various services which include a first class bar, a second class "tourist" bar, a shoe shiner, a writing room, a barber, a lottery office and a wax museum. "So while the station arouses perplexity for its excessive avant-garde architectural style, it does not lack any of the services which exist in the more traditional stations." (ibid.: 18). As a natural point of orientation, the new station and piazza were situated within official tourist itineraries of the city. It was, however, the functional and not the aesthetic aspect of the modernization which drew approval.

The case of the new station is repeatedly overlooked or treated with indifference in the surveys of the city's transformation during the 1950s[2]. These tend to focus instead on the numerous architectural calamities perpetrated under the Lauro administration. Clearly the intervention, essentially determined by central government, did not possess the typical hallmarks of the Lauro era nor did it represent an 'addition' to the city as, for instance, the new housing units on the hills around the *centro storico* which permanently transformed the urban landscape. Nevertheless, it was a significant moment in the modernization of the city's transport system and endowed Naples with a massive, indeed its largest, piazza. This general indifference was already discernable in the lukewarm public response at the time. Despite the official promotion, the new station was not greeted with much enthusiasm. Already in 1955 the architectural critic Roberto Musatti, reporting on the winning designs for an architecture magazine, wrote:

> "The winners have distinguished themselves as the most talented contenders and offer functional guarantees for future Neapolitan travellers, but at the end of the day, let's be frank, they haven't spread their wings over the peaks of poetry." (Mussati 1955: 27)

With work underway, the local press increasingly attacked the uncompromising modern design of the new station building and the disharmonious aspect of the new piazza. Moreover, the giant clearing, which was now intersected by fourteen streets (six of which were principal arteries for transit across the city) only further aggravated the traffic situation. The removal of the old station had not, for instance, liberated the old

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[2] See, for instance, Dal Piaz 1985: 34-44 and Galasso 1978: 248-251. Galasso argues that "the city's infrastructure did not benefit from the Lauro period. One has to arrive at the ring road [*Tangenziale*] in the 1970s to find a public work of great importance – practically the only one" (Galasso 1978: 250).

Via dell'Arenaccia which had been a reason for traffic jams. Rather, vehicles arriving from Corso Lucci had to pass via the centre of the piazza before proceeding northwards along Corso Novara. In 1963 *Roma*, a staunch supporter back in 1956, not only complained about delays in completion of building (which was not suprising considering that the newspaper's proprietor, Lauro, had fallen from power the previous year) but now doubted the merit of the project:

"The road system and layout of the flower beds have turned out even worse [than the station]; the outstretched piazza is not...worthy of a large metropolis where important flows of tourists converge. Its unadorned arrangement appears more appropriate for a provincial town than what is stil considered the moral capital of Italian South." (*Roma*, 4/1/63)

While the newspaper had welcomed the demolition of the nineteenth century station, it now openly acknowledged a general nostalgia for the old piazza:

"It is hoped that the present work will manage to alleviate the negative impact that one recieves when casting a glance from the large piazza to the new station. The view is far worse than the old piazza for which Neapolitans have fond memories." (ibid.)

The new Piazza Garibaldi rapidly assumed the role of a giant road junction which, as private transport rose, became increasingly congested. The concentration of the main routes in the area meant that it was an intersection for the city's traffic flows. The entrance to the Autostrada del Sole was located five hundred metres away on the south side of the railway tracks, while a mile long flyover erected in 1982 along Corso Novara directly linked Piazza Garibaldi with the Otto Calli district in the north of the city. The construction of the Centro Direzionale to the north of the railway lines between 1985 and 1994 and the subsequent decentralization of services and offices from the *centro storico* only provoked a further rise in transit across Piazza Garibaldi. Meanwhile, the piazza's role as the hub of the city's rail network was enhanced in 1972 by the opening of an underground link between the Central Station and the Circumvesuviana railway which served the urban conurbation to the east of Naples. It is not surprising, therefore, that during the 1970s and 1980s Piazza Garibaldi, like Piazza Plebiscito, was associated with the problem of traffic. It very rarely featured in debates about the city's urban development which focused, above all, on public housing and the construction of the Centro Direzionale.

3.ii. Map of pre-*Risanamento* Naples with first central station (1872-1880)

3.2a. and 3.2b. Postcard images from the 1930s of the first central station

3.3. Interior view of old station in late 1950s

3.4. Early image of new station and Piazza Garibaldi during mid-1960s

7.2 Representations of the station area

The public's conception of this "'hole' of vast dimensions" (F. Amato 1992: 91) has traditionally been closely tied to the social and economic character of the area. Piazza Garibaldi has always been synonymous with the '*Zona Ferrovia*' (or simply '*la ferrovia*'), a much larger area which incorporates the neighbourhoods of Vasto, Arenaccia, the northern part of the Mercato district, La Duchesca and Forcella. Station areas have historically held an ambivalent position in the spatial hierarchy of the modern city. While the railway represented the physical link with the rest of the Italian nation and a metaphor for unity (Mercurio 1994), the station itself inherited the role of the historic gateway. The construction of many stations involved the destruction of the city walls; symbolically opening the way to expansion while obliterating the ancient boundaries of a clearly defined urban system. While heralded as the 'pulse' of urban progress and a bourgeois monument to modernity (Alisio 1981: 78), the neo-classical or Italianate railway station was typically situated in the poorest parts of the city and thus stood as physical testimony to the inherent socio-economic contradictions of urban development. Moreover, station areas, traversed by multiple flows, spatially embodied the impersonal and anomic experience of modern city life[3]. In Matilde Serao's vivid account of late nineteenth-century Naples, the station and its limits were used as a yardstick of the city's transformations. Before the *Risanamento*, a stranger arriving at the station had to face "a dirty, foul-smelling city of narrow streets" (Serao 1994: 87) and risk robbery as he or she travelled along the port towards the salubrious West End. Twenty years later, Serao admitted that this had changed:

> "The station piazza now has a vastness worthy of a metropolis. The three broad streets which face the visitor, the two enormous arteries to the left and right and the large buildings in between: all these grand things full of light and air..give the curious onlooker a pleasant first impression." (ibid.: 88)

However, Serao argued that the newly arranged station piazza and the Rettifilo were an elegant 'windshield' which concealed the unpleasant sight of dire poverty that abounded in the adjacent alleyways. Moreover, the continual intrusion of such deprivation onto

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[3] For instance, German expressionists at the beginning of the twentieth century often chose station areas to portray the alienating aspects of a rapidly changing Berlin, as in the case of Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's images of prostitutes in front of Friedrichstrasse station (Bernardini and Gargano 1997).

the 'disemboweled' parts of the city threatened the very foundations of the *Risanamento*:

"After nine o'clock in the evening, the stretch of the Rettifilo from Piazza Depretis [today Piazza Nicola Amore] to the station is traversed by few people and despite the big electric lamps it becomes one of the most dangerous places in the city..In these hours only petty thieves, *camorristi*, former convicts and loose women roam the street - in the street that is supposed to serve the health and redemption of the Neapolitan people!" (ibid.: 97).

The Mercato-Pendino area to the south of the Rettifilo and Piazza Garibaldi, as Serao noted, was especially poor. Developed in the early Middle Ages after the city's market was relocated from the site of the ancient forum (Piazza Gaetano), this part of Naples did not feature the vertical class stratification as elsewhere and was characterized by very low-quality housing. The new neighbourhoods of Vasto and Arenaccia to the north of the station were planned to help solve the chronic housing problems in the '*quartieri bassi*' and as a working-class dormitory for the projected eastern industrial zone, but because of high rents became, practically from the outset, lower middle-class districts (ibid.: 114) [4]. However, to cut costs, appartments were often sub-let, which, according to Serao's bourgeois sensibility, led to a deterioration of conditions. Despite attempts to improve the situation over the course of the century (such as '*le Case Nuove*' built during fascism to the south of the station), these districts are still today officially in a state of 'urban crisis' (Coppola 1997: 82).

More than anywhere else in Naples, the station area's economy was based on intense commercial exchange as a result of its proximity to the city's principal road and rail system. Many of the city's historic markets are still located around Piazza Garibaldi: Piazza Mercato, the regional centre for household items, furniture and fireworks (although this role diminished with the development of suburban superstores in the 1980s), Lavinaio, one of the busiest food markets in the city, and La Duchesca, to the immediate west of the piazza, which has traditionally specialized in cheap clothes as well as general electronic goods. Given the presence of these markets and the railway station, the piazza and its immediate environs also attracted a high number of unlicensed street traders and vendors of contraband or stolen merchandise, as well as a more or less

[4] The *Risanamento* displaced almost 70,000 people and only a fraction of these found homes in the new quarters. The rest returned to the old districts which led to further overcrowding (Baculo 1979: 33).

stable host of swindlers (such as the infamous *paccottari*[5]). This presence would occasionally give rise to conflicts. For instance, in May 1974, a shopkeeper from La Duchesca was murdered after he and fellow proprietors had physically driven away irregular hawkers who had set up their stalls in front of their premises (Pessetti 1977: 24). In addition to this diffuse informal economy, most of the street prostitution in Naples during the post war period was concentrated along the pavements of Piazza Garibaldi and the Rettifilo.

However, it is important to point out that this more unceremonious aspect of Piazza Garibaldi and its surrounding area was rarely represented in a negative way but, rather, was often considered its defining and inevitable character. In a long article in *il Mattino* from 1963, amidst debates over the new layout of the piazza, attention focused on its illicit nocturnal activities. The intention of the article is to introduce the reader, imagined as a resident from the middle-class suburb of Vomero and whose contact with the space is entirely transitory, to "the picturesque and at times humorous side of the piazza" (1/11/63). The piazza at night is described as an exotic place of prostitutes, illegal taxi drivers, hotel hawkers and pizza sellers. These are revealed to be part of a functional night economy: the prostitutes are disciplined and keep within their boundaries, the '*autonoleggiatori*' offer an honest service and cost less than the official taxis, the '*affittacamere*' are the envoys of respectable *pensioni* in the local area, while the young dexterous '*pizzaiuoli*' are able to slip past the police into the station to offer travellers a taste of authentic Neapolitan pizza. During the day time, on the other hand, life in the piazza is depicted as impersonal and mundane:

> "When all these people go to sleep, Piazza della Ferrovia regains its normal appearance. The day lights up its vastness but passers-by are in too much of a hurry to look or if they stop they start as usual to criticize the station, the traffic system, even the "*proboscide*". And so another day begins." (*il Mattino* 1/11/63)

This (bourgeois) desire for the transgressive, is legitimated by incorporating the various spatial practices into a local folkloristic discourse. The empty expanse, robbed of its

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[5] The *paccotto*, part of modern Neapolitan folklore, was the art of duping a person into believing that he or she was buying an expensive watch (or, more commonly today, a mobile phone or video camera) at an astonishingly low price. By an act of dexterity the packaged item would be swapped for an identical box containing a stone or something of similar weight. Often the *pacchettaro* was, and still is, the first person one meets on exiting Naples Central Station

picturesque nineteenth-century station, is rendered 'Neapolitan' by the presence of idiosyncratic activities which elsewhere would be considered undesirable.

Otherwise, the depiction of the area was like that of any other lower middle class and *popolare* part of the *centro storico*. During a disinfection campaign in 1965 which commenced in the station area, Vasto and neighbouring Poggioreale were described as "two of the largest and most populated neighbourhoods in the city" (*il Mattino* 13/6/65) but were not associated in any way with higher levels of street rubbish. The clean-up was considered a city-wide operation: "at the end, three lorries carried away majestic piles of rubbish, the inglorious remains of the council's battle to give Naples a clean and decent appearance" (ibid.). Rather than stigmatizing certain parts of the city, debates focused, for instance, on the inadequacy of equipment to keep the city clean.

> "The humiliating spectacle of lorries overloaded with rubbish driving through the city even in the middle of rush hour must be stopped. This is demanded for the sake of Naples which laboriously but decisively seeks to eliminate the old Bourbon cliché which associates squalor with local folklore." (*il Mattino* 20/7/67)

Only out of the ordinary events were reported in any detail; as in the case of a particularly audacious daytime armed robbery in Via Poerio off the north-west corner of Piazza Garibaldi in 1967 which caused *il Mattino* to exclaim:

> "Such casual contempt of the law, which the robber displayed by pointing a gun at a woman's head in a crowded street during the middle of the day, does not have many precedents. The individual who managed to carry out this seemingly impossible criminal act must be considered extremely dangerous and it is for this reason that efforts have been stepped up to capture him." (*il Mattino* 20/6/67)

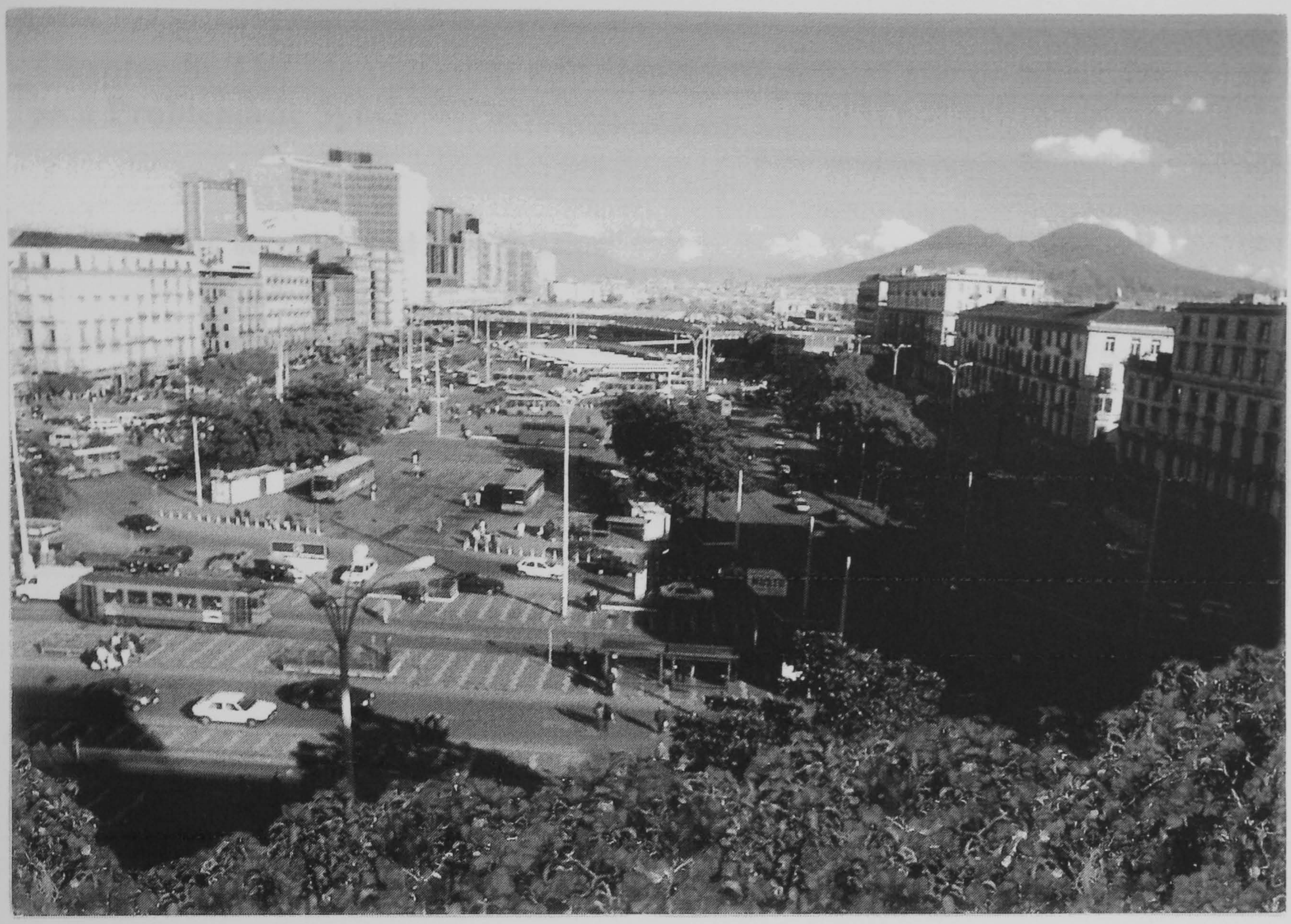
According to the newspaper, what made the crime so incredible, apart from the robber's recklessness, was that it occurred in a busy shopping street in the centre of the city. Despite the area's less than salubrious credentials and its maze of alleyways which offered the assailant his escape route, the place of the crime was not considered significant. From the late 1970s onwards, as the Camorra assumed near total control of the illegal economy, the station area was carved up between clans (the Giulianos in Forcella and the Continis in Vasto and Pendino). However this trend affected the city of Naples as a whole, especially the central neighbourhoods and poor suburbs, and was not directly associated with Piazza Garibaldi.

Finally, when Piazza Garibaldi was not a source of newspaper debates on the state of the city's traffic, it was most regularly represented as a place of protest. The piazza was the traditional starting point for political marches and a chosen location for publicity stunts such as the blocking of traffic or the scaling of the Garibaldi monument (which was popularized by the *disoccupati organizzati* during the 1970s [**fig. 3.5.**]). The piazza's potential political import was made evident during a huge demonstration in 1982 against government threats to suspend production at the steelworks in Bagnoli. Addressing the crowd of workers, the mayor Valenzi announced: "this great demonstration in the piazza will make Finsider and the government change their plans" (*il Mattino* 5/10/82).

From this historical survey of the evolution of the piazza, its social-economic context and its representation in the media, it is possible to make some general observations. Firstly, Piazza Garibaldi rarely figured in debates about the city, unless these were concerned with the question of traffic. Despite the initial fanfare in the 1950s, the symbolic significance of the new station and piazza did not extend beyond the original intentions of the project which were to improve the rail service and the circulation of road traffic. Lauro's decision to incorporate the new space into a grand design of 'urban renewal' was eclipsed by the initiatives independently masterminded by his administration. The plan to render Piazza Municipio the gateway to a modern Naples for tourists was pursued with far greater conviction and overrode public opinion and legal constraints (as reflected in the controversial felling of the trees in 1956). Secondly, the social dimension of the station area was seldom a cause for public alarm. Rather, its promiscuous, unruly, picaresque aspect was often considered part of its allure. Issues such as crime, urban decay, and rubbish were considered city-wide issues and not space specific and although some areas were classified as 'black spots' these were seldom stigmatized or placed under the spotlight. It is significant that during the 1950s and 1960s one of the few spaces discussed was Piazza Municipio: reports in the local press would bemoan the presence of street traders and petty swindlers who spoiled the image of the city's gateway. Thirdly, it seems quite evident that the general public has never been particularly fond of the new Piazza Garibaldi. Many city planners continue to dream of a station relocated two kilometres to the east, while the present Piazza Garibaldi is considered a sort of urban miscarriage. Its vast dimensions during the 1960s were criticized as 'un-Neapolitan' and it has never featured in the city's symbolic

cartography. The only popular postcard images of the piazza date from the 1930s [**figs. 3.2a. & 3.2b.**]; and although images of the present Piazza Garibaldi have been printed [**figs. 3.6a. & 3.6b.**], in the last few years these have been very difficult to find and are never sold in the usual kiosks or tourist outlets. Over the last forty years a nostalgic myth has grown around the old station and its 'intimate' piazza. For instance, in a recent article in *il Mattino* which sought to unearth the 'glorious history' of Piazza Garibaldi from beneath its present layer of "*degrado*" (urban degradation), no reference is made to the last forty years. Instead in a terse endnote, the vast cavity is considered the unfortunate but inescapable consequence of modernization (*il Mattino* 16/2/00). Mario Isnenghi labels such "products of modernity" '*piazzali*': spaces "where everything is too big, open, disproportionate and where neither the buildings nor the passers-by are to scale" (Isnenghi 1994: 8).

3.5. The scaling of the Garibaldi monument during a protest of the *disoccupati organizzati* in 1976



Napoli

3.6a. and 3.6b. Two rare postcard images of the present Piazza Garibaldi.
3.6a.: post-G7. 3.6b.: mid-1980s

Chapter 8: The Management and Representation of Piazza Garibaldi as a Problematic Space

8.1 Tourism, security and immigration

As well as a hub of the city's informal economy, Piazza Garibaldi had long been a marginal site of vagrancy, prostitution and, from the late 1970s onwards, hard drug abuse (Lombardo 1987). As such, it was not unique among the station areas of other large European cities (Merrifield 2000: 484). From the middle of the 1980s the area also began to attract immigrants, firstly North and West Africans and later East Europeans and Asians. Initially, this presence did not alter the general attitude to the area. Immigration was treated politically as a national rather than a specifically urban question, and while the local press began to identify Piazza Garibaldi from the late 1980s onwards as one of the city's principal 'immigrant spaces', reports on incidents (such as the arrest of Maghrebis involved in fights) and investigations (for example into the poor state of hotels) were connected with debates on immigration and not on Piazza Garibaldi. During the course of the 1990s, Piazza Garibaldi, itself, did not markedly change, but its significance was totally transformed with the inception of an official discourse of urban renewal which would become inseparable from the inter-related issues of tourism, security and immigration. Not only was it reconceived as the portal to the *centro storico* but it became the focus of political and public debates over the control, use and shape of what was now widely perceived as a problematic public space.

Piazza Garibaldi had traditionally been closely linked with tourism in Naples. As well as the arrival point for the majority of visitors, almost half the city's available beds were concentrated in the surrounding area. However, the steady drop in tourism in Naples from the 1970s onwards seriously affected the local hotel business which increasingly became associated with the seamier end of the market. After the earthquake, many of the basic *pensioni* were paid by the council to accomodate homeless families and were later transformed into dormitories for immigrants looking for the cheapest sleeping arrangements.

The general situation in the piazza, traversed in all directions by a continual flow of traffic, was not consonant with the tourist revival to which Naples aspired in the 1990s. Given the lack of leisure facilities and the underdevelopment of the coastline, attention

focused on harnessing the city's artistic and architectural resources. By nature, cultural tourism is a more elite form of tourism. Over sixty per cent of foreign Western tourists in Naples, for example, stay in four or five star hotels (Solima 1999: 26). It is argued that this higher spending and more 'culturally conscious' group offer the greatest economic benefits to the city: "if the city moves away from this precious core of tourists, it fulls into mass tourism comprised of transitory crowds which cause more problems than wealth" (V. Amato 1996: 29). The consumption of the 'art city', which is usually extended over a large urban area (unlike the 'leisure city' which often bases itself around single attractions such as sports stadiums or amusement parks), demands certain conditions. Apart from adequate hotel facilities and efficient services, the cultural tourist needs to be guaranteed a clean and, above all, safe environment. Leisure facilities built for a 'visitor class' can be located in areas of urban decline if they are equipped with protective measures which conceal or bypass possible danger; as in the case of the New York Yankees baseball stadium built on the edge of the Bronx (Eisinger 2000: 317). The cultural tourist city, on the other hand, cannot fully function without eliminating risk or acquiring the approval and cooperation of its residents. Otherwise it risks becoming a destination for a different class of intrepid independent traveller, which was the reputation that Naples had begun to acquire in the late 1980s, or a place of transit, as summed up by the commonplace: "before people would go straight to the port to take the ferry to Capri". Tourist regeneration in Naples under the Bassolino administration involved opening monuments, marking out itineraries (Comune di Napoli 1996) and providing safe and pleasant places (such as Piazza Plebiscito) where visitors were encouraged to linger. At the same time, however, this delicate process of renewal was hampered by persistent images among tourists and tour operators of Naples as a 'dangerous' and 'violent' city (Colella 1999: 37; Solima 1999: 90).

As a result of the growing economic importance of tourism, the tourist became a sort of new 'virtual' urban class which directly influenced debates about the city's transformation. If some aspect of Naples was deemed disagreeable to the imaginary tourist, then it was considered deleterious to the whole of the city. Since the G7 summit in particular, it has been very common to read or hear local politicians and opinionists exclaim: "a bad image for tourists". Piazza Garibaldi, conceived as the city's 'lobby', became a testing ground for first impressions of the city and was therefore, like Piazza

Plebiscito, commonly labelled a '*biglietto da visita*'. This latter term is a highly ambivalent concept. While rhetorically used to mean a positive advertisement, '*biglietto da visita*' also refers to how a city objectively presents itself to a newcomer. In this sense Piazza Garibaldi lives up to its title: the multiple systems of commercial exchange both in the piazza and in the surrounding markets represent the typical manifestation of the economic and social foundations of Neapolitan society. Therefore, the fact that it was continually reprimanded, as shall be seen, for failing to fulfill this role reflects as much a redefinition of the city as an antipathy towards the chaos and certain subjects and practices in the piazza itself.

The link between the city and disorder has been a constant motif in the history of modern urban development (Cohen 1985: 205-210). However, during the last decade, the general issue of law and order has increasingly dominated debates about the city in Italy as it has across Europe and North America (Petrillo 1996). Sociologists and urban theorists have pointed to a systemic crisis and an ideological shift. Increasing uncertainty and confusion in the face of economic and political restructuring has translated into a diffuse sense of insecurity (Bouchard 1997; Landuzzi 1999a). Traditional forms of 'endogenous social control' (Palidda 1999: 95) such as the church, trade unions and political parties have been divested of their former public roles, or have, in the case of the welfare state, been dismantled, leaving the police forces and judiciary as the only stable, responsive institutions in the eye of public opinion. Contemporaneously there has been a consensual shift to the right in criminological thought and social control policy (De Giorgi 2000: 21-48). The socially and economically determined vision of crime in which offenders were to be rehabilitated back into society has been superseded by a stress on protecting the real or potential victims of crime and the categorization and control of dangerous classes and environments (Bouchard 1997). As the generic '*cittadino*' has assumed precedence over social class in mainstream political discourse, the notion of '*sicurezza*' has been conceived less in terms of defending the state from external threats (such as terrorism and the mafia), and more in terms of everyday street crime which directly affects members of the public. In Italian cities, especially in the north, various resident associations and local business groups have been active in organizing campaigns against '*microdelinquenza*', a very vague concept which encapsulates eveything from noise to drug dealing (Dal Lago 1999: 83). Attention has focused on public spaces in the city,

from whole neighbourhoods to single streets and piazzas (ibid.: 78). These are the arenas where local 'identities' are defended and where claims about safety and order are made. Spaces occupied by 'deviant others' (such as heroin addicts, prostitutes, tramps and immigrants) are subjectively constructed as dangerous and marginal, even in the absence of objective indications of rising crime, as in the case of San Salvario in Turin (Foot 2000).

During the last decade, the issue of urban security has also pervaded political agendas in Italian cities[6]. Traditionally, the technical aspects of social control were the domain of the police while local administrations were primarily concerned with providing deterrents in the form of social welfare. As a consequence of shifting attitudes to crime prevention and following the 1993 electoral reform which increased the public visibility of the mayor and administration, local policy has concentrated on addressing and resolving public sentiments of insecurity and disorder. As explained in chapter 2, Bassolino regarded urban security a fundamental principle of local citizenship and a necessary priority for a new municipal left (1996b: 63). Therefore, while he underlined the urgent need to deal with Camorra (although he considered this a regional rather than a specifically urban problem[7]), he also recognized "a feeling of widespread insecurity" in the city (ibid.: 59). Despite his insistence on the need to tackle the social and economic causes of crime and his reticence to label any particular group as criminal, Bassolino stressed that social exclusion could no longer be considered an excuse for illegal practices or delinquent behaviour:

> "This is a particularly delicate theme for the left. I believe that it is necessary to dissociate ourselves from an overly "social" interpretation of the phenomenon. We must pay maximum attention to the sphere of [social] prevention..but we must also acknowlege that repression – the fight against different forms of crime and illegality – must be clear and strong." (ibid.: 60)

Bassolino called for greater political collaboration with the police in the management and maintenance of public order. Mayors, he argued, played an important role because

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[6] The present Forza Italia mayor of Milan, Gabriele Albertini, has attemped to import the ideology of 'zero tolerance' from New York to combat street crime. The issue of law and order has by no means been the sole preserve of the political right. In Bologna the centre-left Vitali administration's obsession with public security (to the point that it tried to impose a night time ban on loitering in a central piazza in 1996 to ward off tramps and drug dealers) preannounced the victory of the right in 1999 (Monteventi and Ghedini 1999).

[7] The inescapable problem of organized crime in the city was not a theme which constantly mobilized local policy and public opinion and was more often than not confronted with spectacular police and army 'blitzes' organized by the central government in emergency situations.

of their "knowledge of the territory" (ibid.: 62). Similar, but more unreserved views to those held by Bassolino, were frequently pronounced by the police forces, business organizations and local media. For instance, at the end of 1999, business leaders claimed that, unlike elsewhere, street crime in Naples had blocked economic investment and demanded a more vigorous application of the law (*Corriere del Mezzogiorno* 19/10/99), while Antonio Manganelli, the chief constable for Naples, called for greater cooperation from Neapolitans:

> "The citizen must become the basic cell of social control..We need to increase police activity at neighbourhood level and develop to the best we can our knowledge of the territory." (ibid.)

As in the rest of Italy, public attention in Naples focused on strategic parts of the city perceived to be vulnerable to public disorder and crime. Nowhere was this more the case than in Piazza Garibaldi, which in the late 1990s became the principal "*zona di degrado*" of the *centro storico*. The term '*degrado*' is a cornerstone in popular and political lexicons of the contemporary Italian city. Like *biglietto da visita*, it is an ambivalent concept. On the one hand it refers to urban decline (delapidated urban fabric, social and economic exclusion) and poor environmental conditions (Landuzzi 1999a). As well as historically poor, the area around Piazza Garibaldi had long registered the highest levels of noise and atmospheric pollution in Naples (Marciano and Saulino 1995; Macaluso 1995). At the same time, '*degrado*' alludes to a moral degeneration of city life and, when this distinction is not foregrounded, tends to be used to categorize (and stigmatize) certain areas. Therefore, while crime levels in the station area during the 1990s did not markedly rise and were lower than other neighbourhoods (Cantiere Sociale di Napoli 1999), a host of 'deviant others' were nevertheless identified and placed under public surveillance: tramps, junkies, prostitutes, petty swindlers, alcoholics and, above all, immigrants.

Immigration has been at the heart of debates about Italian cities over the last decade. According to most recent statistics there are over 1.25 million foreigners in the country (Caritas di Roma 1999), 1.1 million of whom are classifiable as immigrants[8].

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[8] Immigrants refer to those arriving from outside advanced capitalist states. An immigrant is legally classified as such if he or she stays in the country for more than three months (Apap 1999: 107) and is therefore distinguishable from the foreign visitor on a tourist visa. I choose to use the terms immigration/ immigrant rather than migration/migrant aware of the problematic nature of both sets of categories. While

Throughout the 1980s, there was a general indifference towards the phenomenon despite the fact that over half of the present immigrant population arrived during this period (Calvanese and Pugliese 1991). Until 1990 the legal status of foreigners was still based on a fascist public order law of 1931. Over the following decade, in the face of public moral panics such as the 'invasion' of Albanians in 1991 and 1997, immigration was increasingly conceived politically and publicly as a social problem that needed to be regulated. Comparative analyses have shown that while in 1988 only 34% of Italians thought there were too many immigrants, this had shot up to 64% in 1993, one of the highest rates in Europe (Dal Lago 1999: 26). Legislation after 1990 was primarily concerned with restricting entry and combating irregular immigration in order to bring Italy into line with EC directives on Schengen (Apap 1999; Sciortino 1999). Although the 'Martelli Law' (1990), Dini Decree (1995) and the Legge 40 (1998) all issued amnesties for irregular immigrants (not, of course, as charitable gestures but as a means of controlling the phenomenon), social and civil measures were in comparison very limited. The present Legge 40 passed by the centre-left government sets out a series of immigrant rights but these are overshadowed by mechanisms to fight 'illegal' immigration such as expulsions and detention centres. Many of the more progressive proposals of the original bill (including, significantly, the vote in administrative elections) were removed when the law was rushed in following public alarm surrounding a series of crimes involving immigrants during the summer of 1997 (Dal Lago 1999: 27)[9].

More than any other social group, immigrants have been the target of law and order offensives. These have occurred on two 'fronts' (Cotesta 1999, p.448). On the 'external front', national borders have been seen to be vulnerable to the 'invasion' of '*clandestini*' (irregulars) who take advantage of Italy's frontier position (although the fact that thousands have had to risk their lives to enter the country and that hundreds of others

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migration captures the cultural, social, economic as well as the more positive libertarian-utopian apects of transglobal movement, immigration underlines the political and legal limits in which this movement takes place and therefore seems a more appropriate critical term. Certainly, immigration implies a uni-directional experience, while it is often the case that the (im)migrant will often make (or hope to make) homeward journeys.

[9] For immigrants, the Italian state is more 'tolerant' than Northern European countries but more arbitrary in terms of social and economic security. Housing, for instance, is nationally a huge problem. Immigants have been assigned the right to council property but there is a general severe shortage of housing which leads to conflicts with host applicants. A housing officer in a small town near Modena, one of the most progressive provinces in terms of immigration, claims that the only option for immigrants, other than renting in the expensive private sector, is to occupy abandoned property (Alfredo Cavaliere in a seminar at the STOA institute, Ercolano 6/3/00).

have died during sea crossings would refute the common claim that Italy is an 'easy' option for immigrants). On the 'internal front', immigration has been considered both the cause and the symptom of urban decay. The conspicuous concentration of immigrants in particular parts of cities (such as station areas), coupled with the unclear or misunderstood nature of their relationship with urban space, has often led to these areas being labelled as "dangerous" or "at risk" (Foot 2000). It is the tension between this physical presence and social distance which renders the immigrant in the eyes of the public "an "unknown" subject who is dispossessed of all *spatial legitimacy*." (Landuzzi 1999b: 93 author's italics). While certain events such as public disturbances and police arrests of irregulars are used by the mass media and acknowledged experts on immigration (such as the sociologist Umberto Melotti (1993)) to create simplistic stereotypes which link immigrants with urban decline, neighbourhood committees and citizen groups, especially in northern cities such as Turin (Foot 2000) and Genoa (Petrillo 2000), have played a significant role in turning subjective fears into political issues. Public action by residents, such as street patrols, often directly supported or coordinated by right wing political movements like the Northern League, have just as often involved political activists from the former Communist Party (PDS), who see themselves working for the public good and preserving urban identities threatened by change (ibid.). Antonello Petrillo argues that neighbourhood committees often possess a mythicized sense of the past city. Young professionals who moved back into Genoa's *centro storico* lamented the disappearance of "good thieves and the prostitutes of Fabrizio André [a local folk singer]" who had been usurped by new non-Italian inhabitants (ibid.).

The stranger in the city has always been a source of urban fears and desires, as exemplified in the early urban treatises of Simmel and the Chicago School (Landuzzi 1999b: 79-81). However, the negative reception and representation of immigrants in the city in public debates cannot be solely explained in terms of fear of the other, cultural distance or racism. It is not simply a question of political mobilization over identity crisis (as exploited by the Northern League) which conceives immigrants as "generators of insecurity and mistrust" (ibid.: 75). Immigrants are incessantly constructed as the other by a situation of political-legal limbo which excludes them not just from the rights

enjoyed by Italians, but from hegemonic notions of 'identity'[10]. Official terms used to brand the phenomenon, in particular '*extracomunitario*' (literally 'non-EC' but conceived as 'from outside advanced capitalist geo-political space'[11]) and '*clandestino*' (irregular immigrant), reaffirm the dominant definition of immigrants and their marginal position in Italian society.

> "These are categories which never refer to some autonomous characteristic, but to what the immigrant is not: he's [sic] not European, he's not a native, he's not a citizen, his papers are not in order, he's not one of us." (Dal Lago 1999: 213)

This condition renders the immigrant a 'nonperson' (ibid.). Those in extreme marginal social positions, such as the homeless or heroin addicts, ultimately retain their personhood by their eligible claim to civil rights. Immigrants, especially those perceived as irregular and therefore criminal, are removed of any legitimate social existence: "The only existence recognized is that of that of a physical body to feed, control or detain" (ibid.: 222). Moreover, the fact that the immigrant is bound to the duty of work in order to 'earn' his or her status as a regular (Boutang 1997) means that the foreign individual or group on a street corner in a visible state of economic inactivity is automatically classified as '*clandestino*' and a potential threat. Any analysis of their relationship with urban space must therefore consider the political-legal framework which constructs their representation and not just social and cultural notions of 'otherness' and 'identity'.

Naples has experienced immigration from non-Western countries since the 1960s (with the arrival of small groups of Eritreans and Moroccan itinerants) but it was not until the 1980s that it became a sizeable, publicly recognized phenomenon. According to statistics for the end of 1997, there were approximately 17,500 regular immigrants in the city. To this figure must be added approximately 10,000 individuals who applied for

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[10] Immigrants are subjected to a continual negotiation of status with the Italian state. A regular immigrant by law must posses a permit to stay which needs to be continually renewed every one to four years. After five years continual residence in Italy an immigrant may apply for a '*carta di soggiorno*' which endows a greater degree of legal stability and is only removed in the event of conviction for serious crime. The application for Italian citizenship is an extremely drawn-out process and was made more difficult to acquire after legislation in 1992 which limited the principle of *ius soli* (Sciortino 1999). The consequences are manifold. For instance, without Italian citizenship, immigrants are not considered eligible for employment in the state sector (Maher 1996: 175).

[11] In addition, the term '*extracomunitario*' is directly constituted by the discriminatory context of trans-national movement, given that it entered into popular usage at the same time as Italy began to negotiate its traumatic passage into Schengen; an agreement which would open the internal borders with fellow EC member states on the proviso that it sealed its external borders. (Indeed, it is because of this subordinate relationship with the EC that the notion of 'extra-comunitarian' is antithetical to British political discourse!)

documents during the most recent amnesty (de Filippo 1999). These figures are guided estimates and do not account for irregulars; in other words, new arrivals or those whose documents have expired. Nevertheless, after Rome, Milan and Turin, Naples can be said to be Italy's fourth 'immigrant city'[12]. Like the rest of Italy, immigration in Naples is characterized by numerous different national groups[13]. Immigrants are visibly concentrated in specific parts of the city: the station area, central neighbourhoods such as the Spanish Quarters, Montesanto and Sanità, and in peripheral zones such as Pianura and Ponticelli.

It is very difficult for immigrants to find regular employment in Naples. Work in the industrial or building sector is highly precarious and badly paid, and mostly located to the north of Naples and around the Vesuvian towns (F. Amato 2000). Significantly, almost seventy per cent of immigrants in Naples, including the most 'stable' communities (Sri Lankan, Philipino, Cape Verdean and Somalian) are employed in the domestic sector. The other principle group, smaller but much more visible, is engaged in informal commercial activities such as street trading. The lower cost of living and housing means that for many immigrants, Naples is an ideal 'port of call' prior to onward migration to the north of Italy and the rest of Europe and acts as a suitable base for those employed in seasonal agricultural work in the South of Italy.

There is a general tendency, both nationally and locally, to view Naples as a more open and tolerant city for immigrants. This image is only partially true. Immigrants do indeed appear to be more accepted and have managed to insert themselves into the local informal economy. The Neapolitan axiom "*l'arte d'arrangiarsi*" – the art of getting by in the face of adversity – is often attributed to the practical experiences of the city's new residents as evidence of their 'assimilation' into a distinct urban way of life. However, although immigrants are perhaps more readily employed by locals, they usually earn extremely low wages and do not enjoy any form of job security (for instance, they account for a high proportion of fatal injuries in the building trade). Meanwhile, local

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[12] More immigrants live in Naples than any other city in the south (Bari: 5,000, Palermo: 16,000) and more than in Genoa or Bologna (both around 10,000) but far less than in Milan (86,000) and Rome (136,500) (based on calculations from statistics in Caritas di Roma 1999).

[13] The 'official' population includes a large Sri Lankan community (ca. 4,000), Filipinos (ca. 2,500), Maghrebis (Moroccans, Algerians and Tunisians), West Africans (in particular Senegalese, Burkinabé, Ivorians and Nigerians), Cape Verdeans (ca. 1,200; the most historic and largest community outside Rome), Somalis (ca. 1,000) as well as more recent arrivals: East Europeans (in particular Poles, Romanians and Ukrainians), Chinese and Pakistanis.

newspapers continue to regard racism (perceived as physical attacks on immigrants) as a problem of elsewhere. There is no equivalent of a Northern League which employs overtly racist arguments and mobilizes public campaigns against immigrants. Yet. 'common sense' (and racist) associations between immigrants and urban decline are as frequent in public debates in Naples as they are in the rest of Italy. Moreover, in terms of social services and support for immigrants, Naples does not possess the extensive voluntary and local government networks of some northern Italian cities. While the Bassolino administration was sensitive to immigrant issues and funded cultural and social associations working in the sector, its interventions were very limited. Naples has acquired a reputation for political mobilization around the issue of immigrant rights, exacerbated by the particularly inefficent police and state bureaucracies, but these have largely been organized by non-governmental organziations and extraparliamentary political groups.

Despite the political rhetoric about a socially inclusive city, as non-Neapolitans and non-voters, immigrants (unlike tourists) are not perceived as beneficiaries of urban regeneration. The scooterist crossing Piazza Plebiscito, the pick-pocketer, the unruly *scugnizzo* are all ejected from official narratives of local identity but remain, by civil or birth right, 'Neapolitan'. The immigrant, rather, must earn his or her place in this narrative (through good behaviour and authentic cultural 'beingness') which will ultimately reflect well on the host society's 'multicultural' spirit. Otherwise, the uncontrolled, unexplained visible presence of immigrants in strategic places becomes a problem and typically presents a potential threat to tourism. The term '*straniero*' therefore has a double meaning: on the one hand it refers to foreign tourists who receive preferential treatment in the local media, while on the other it implies immigrant. Anyone who looks foreign is therefore compartmentalized into one of the two categories. In the event of physiognomic ambiguity and in certain areas of the city, this may lead to misinterpretations, as in the case of a black American soldier of the NATO forces who was arrested in Piazza Garibaldi in the summer of 1998 during a police crackdown on 'illegal' immigrants.

8.2 Debates on law and order

How does Piazza Garibaldi fit into the narrative of urban regeneration? Is the problematic nature of a station area an obstacle to the reimaging of Naples or should it be accepted as an inevitable feature of the contemporary city? As in the case of Piazza Plebiscito, the G7 summit in July 1994 played a pivotal role in redefining Piazza Garibaldi as a key public space in the city. It also had the catalytic effect of merging debates about regeneration, tourism, security and immigration and projecting them onto a particular space. The piazza was one of the strategic 'nodes' during the event: it greeted those participants and journalists who arrived by train and, more importantly, it lay on the route of the motorcade which transported international statesmen and delegates from the city airport to the luxury hotels on the seafront. Its transformation had been considered the most tricky and improbable of all the interventions. Three billion lire were spent on cleaning the piazza and surrounding buildings, repaving the road surface and laying out new green areas. Its unprecedented closure to private vehicles provoked chaos in the surrounding streets and brought protests from shopkeepers who claimed that the carpark in the piazza was essential to their trade (*il Mezzogiorno* 9/4/94).

The grooming of Piazza Garibaldi for the world event did not, however, simply mean tackling its traffic and shabby appearance but also involved stringent security arrangements. Shortly after preparations got underway, the summit's organizers were accused by a local anti-racist group of planning to expell immigrants from Piazza Garibaldi and the rest of Naples. During a debate on national radio at the beginning of May about the effect that the G7 would have on Naples, the prefect Improta responded that he merely wanted to remove street traders from the centre of the city:

"First of all I don't like this phrase "clean up" and it isn't the terminology used by the government or the security forces. Certainly street traders will not be allowed in the Royal Palace, Piazza Plebiscito or other areas connected with the delegations. Certainly, there will be severe measures to remove people who may in some way present *a distorted image of Naples*. They will have to adapt to certain rules because you know that in order to survive these foreigners often and willingly sell objects in what I'd call an unlawful way, in the sense they occupy the city's pavements and this certainly *isn't a pleasant image*." (*il Mattino* 5/5/94, my italics)

According to Improta, immigrants visibly involved in informal economic activities threatened the urban décor crafted for the event. Such commercial practices had traditionally been considered characteristic of the city. Postcards of real-life Naples often featured street traders in front of tourist vistas [**figs. 3.7a. & 3.7b.**]. Immigrant hawkers, however, would present a 'distorted' and 'unpleasant' image of the city. Bassolino, who was also in the studio, hoped that expulsions would not be carried out:

> "It would seem a wrong thing to do. Naples is, and should remain, an open city and must be able to present itself in the fairest way and in complete legality. But this must regard everybody, certainly not just immigrant workers, also because Naples has perhaps, among Italy's large cities, the greatest history of tolerance and friendship towards other peoples." (ibid.)

Bassolino instead alluded to the city's anti-racist spirit but simultaneously equated the question of immigration with the issue of law and order. In both responses, immigrants were conceived as non-Neapolitans and were therefore excluded from notions of local identity and the benefits of the G7 summit.

The prefect's justification of security measures led to angry reactions. The Communist Refoundation senator, Giovanni Russo Spena, declared solidarity with immigrants as fellow Campanians, the *centro sociale* Officina 99 organized a protest in Piazza Garibaldi itself, while Don Elvio Damoli, a local leader of the catholic charity *Caritas*, expressed his growing doubts on the legitimacy of holding a summit of the richest nations in Naples:

> "I wonder whether the prefect's attitude is right, but the more I think about it, the more it seems just an act of repression..For years an infinite number of clearly irregular positions have been tolerated and only now they decide to remove the *extracomunitari*. What's the aim of this decision? I hope the G7 are more humane during their economic super-summit and spare attention for the poorest people." (*il Mattino* 4/5/94)

Despite the controversy provoked by the radio debate, two weeks before the summit the administration issued a decree expelling all authorized and un-licensed, Neapolitan and immigrant street traders from the spaces connected with the event. The number of traders between the station and Posillipo on the west of the city fluctuated between the council's figure of about a thousand (*la Repubblica* 21/6/94) and the press's estimate of ten thousand (*la Repubblica* 22/6/94). According to the press. immigrants constituted the overwhelming majority and were concentrated around Piazza Garibaldi. This was confirmed by the Assessor for Normality, Amato Lamberti:

"This is the period when the city is most choked up with blacks, but in a few weeks time they will disperse to work in the countryside. In the meantime, however, they will all have to move towards the periphery or neighbouring towns." (*la Repubblica* 22/6/94)

As a counter measure, Lamberti promised to create three ethnic 'suk' in council-owned premises in the centre, east and west of the city (but away from Piazza Garibaldi). The condition was that immigrants sell authentic 'ethnic' products from their countries of origin (and not the usual false goods bought in Naples) and that these markets become an attraction for Neapolitans and tourists. In other words, as with the city's monuments and neglected piazzas, immigrants needed to be '*rivalorizzati*' (their potential value harnessed). But after the hype of the summit subsided, and despite drawing up a deadline for applications for licences, the assessor's plan dwindled into nothing.

The empty, militarily guarded piazza embodied most acutely the complimentary paradigmatic visions of the 'G7 city': *la città bella* (traffic and immigrant free) and *la città blindata* (militarily guarded). The failure of the event to permanently institute these two criteria in Piazza Garibaldi was measured in the press by the speed with which it returned to 'normal'. Instead, the summit instigated a more or less permanent monitoring of the piazza and its problems. From this point, the immigrant presence and the piazza's transformation were to become inseparable issues.

The hasty facelift of Piazza Garibaldi did not bring about a permanent change to its appearance or to its function. Over the following years, various schemes were drawn up to improve the shape of the piazza. At the beginning of 1996, the administration announced plans to reopen a system of subways under the piazza that had been closed for over a decade. These would contain much needed public facilities and provide an official place for street traders to sell their wares away from the pavements. However, to this day, they remain closed. The street layout, car parks and waiting areas for buses and taxis were reorganized in the vain attempt to solve the piazza's chaotic traffic. In the second half of 2000, the flyover in Corso Novara, one of the causes for high levels of atmospheric pollution in the area, was finally dismantled. On occasions, emergency measures were adopted to combat congestion and pollution. During September 1999, for instance, vehicles not equipped with catalytic converters were banned from the piazza and control points were set up in the surrounding streets.

Given the limited effect of the few minor alterations, hope switched to large scale infrastructural projects. In November 2000, plans for the renovation of the railway station were revealed by the consortium '*Grande Stazioni*' which had refurbished Rome's Termini station for the 2000 Jubilee celebrations. The revamped building would include a new shopping centre and four-star hotel as well as security measures such as protective fencing and close-circuit cameras. The intention was to transform the station into "a centre for cultural and social meetings" (D'Angelo 2000: 19) which would have an ameliorative impact on the "*degrado*" of the surrounding area (ibid.). At the beginning of 2001, work instead commenced on the final stage of the underground line which would link Piazza Garibaldi with Vomero and the city's northern suburbs. This, it was predicted, would eventually alleviate congestion around the piazza. Both projects are long term enterprises. The new underground station, for instance, is unlikely to be terminated within the next decade (Comune di Napoli 1999: 169). In the meantime the city is destined to endure for a long time the present layout of the piazza as well as disruptions provoked by future construction sites.

The attempts (and failures) after the G7 to redesign Piazza Garibaldi were overshadowed by calls for greater controls in the piazza. This was in contrast to the new physical arrangement of Piazza Plebiscito which had conditioned all subsequent debates about the space. Moreover, while the closure of Piazza Plebiscito was carried out from above by an intransigent administration, political decisions regarding Piazza Garibaldi were very much influenced by members of the public. During the second half of the 1990s, a frequent figure to intervene in debates was Mario Pagliari, until 1999 the owner of the four-star Hotel Terminus in Piazza Garibaldi and President of the Association of Hoteliers in Naples. Pagliari's influence stemmed fom his unofficial role as expert on tourism. In May 1998 *la Repubblica* published a letter from the hotelier addressed to Bassolino. While congratulating the mayor's achievements on reviving the city's fortunes, Pagliari insinuated that the police usually present in the piazza had been switched to more monumental parts of the city for the '*Maggio dei Monumenti*' festival:

> "All those small but damaging illegal activities which increase, if possible, the negative image of this zone have reappeared. I know for a fact, Mr Mayor, the importance you attach to the image of the city and how much this has had a concrete effect on the results so far achieved and I am among those who has always supported your policies against those who have considered and continue to consider them a façade and more a question of consensus than substance." (*la Repubblica* 17/5/98)

Piazza Garibaldi should receive equal attention given its importance for the city's tourism. Pagliari subjectively defines the problems of the piazza and proffers solutions. For instance, he repeats his claim already raised in previous years[14] that almost half of available hotel beds are concentrated in the railway area, which accordingly implies that almost half of the city's tourists have slept there. The fact that many of these hotels are used solely by immigrants does not enter into consideration.

Bassolino's rejoinder to Pagliari in the same newspaper two days later, laid down the administration's position on Piazza Garibaldi and reiterated the importance that it attached to tourism.

"The presence of the central station objectively makes the piazza the official gateway and *biglietto da visita* of the city. Piazza Garibaldi remains a difficult area. Policing cannot solve everything even though the problem raised by Pagliari is true and I shall raise this at the Provincial Committee for law and order. This programme [of renewal] can only be successful if increased controls and the reuse of closed or badly used spaces are accompanied by a renewed attention on the part of the community to the area of social exclusion (vagrancy, prostitution, *clandestini*) both in terms of prevention and solidarity, and when there are connections with organized crime, of necessary repression." (*La Repubblica* 19/5/98)

Bassolino is forced to recognize and act upon the issue of law and order but argues that this is not enough. He also introduces the question of immigrants (which Pagliari, for once, does not touch on). The '*clandestino*', apart from being a physiognomically recognizable condition, is regarded part of a potentially criminal group. Moreover, he implies that the piazza is 'badly' used and therefore has little public meaning. Immigrants' uses of the piazza are not acknowledged because these do not constitute part of a public's conception of the space.

"Piazza Garibaldi in the heads of Neapolitans remains that muddle of things, a confusing and perhaps dangerous place, where one goes only when it is really necessary and passes by in a great hurry. Our challenge..before everything else is to change this very idea that Neapolitans have about this piazza which must remain "*popolare* and raucous", a space of transit and a meeting place, but at the same time it must become a lively and welcoming piazza. This is because, as Pagliari rightly points out, there is a considerable number of hotel beds in the surrounding area. The revaluing of Piazza Garibaldi is a very important goal for the whole city. Let's work together." (ibid.)

He argues that the autochthonous (Neapolitan) view of the piazza as a disordered space of transit needs to be changed if it is to live up to its tourist potential. "Let's work

[14] In October 1996, Pagliari had complained that companies such as British Airways had instructed their employees to avoid staying in the station area (*La Repubblica* 1/10/96).

together" is therefore an invitation to Pagliari and Neapolitans but one which does not extend to immigrants who cannot legitimately define the conditions of a "lively and welcoming piazza". The debate over the piazza is therefore set by Pagliari and expanded by Bassolino. On the very same day, the administration announced plans to transfer buses from under Hotel Cavour which had waged a two-year campaign to get them removed. *La Repubblica* interviewed the proprietor and other hoteliers in the piazza who affirmed the latent link with immigrants: "we've got nothing against the *extracomunitari*..if only their presence didn't provoke such noticeable disorder" (ibid.). Traffic and immigrants were therefore part of the same overall problem.

Local 'experts' like Pagliari played an important role in framing what was at stake in Piazza Garibaldi. ASCOM, the association of shopkeepers, similarly pressed for a permanent police presence to protect businesses and residents. In 1999, its representative for the station area claimed that leniency in the past had forced 30% of "old residents" to abandon the area and in that year alone, fifteen colleagues had closed up shop and moved elsewhere (*il Corriere del Mezzogiorno* 4/11/99). Managers of smaller hotels and local tour operators periodically organized night patrols to "protect tourists" and monitored the piazza to inform the authorities of "levels of *degrado*" (which ranged from rubbish to illicit activities). Like others, they refuted accusations of racism, claiming that they offered an essential public service in an area that had been abandoned by local authorities (*il Mattino* 1/12/99).

Local councillors also applied pressure on the administration to intervene in the piazza. In 1999, in response to the lack of tangible progress and what it saw as a preoccupation with other more historic piazzas, the centre-right controlled *circoscrizione* (district council) of Mercato-Pendino backed a project by local maverick architect Aldo Loris Rossi to cover the tracks of the Circumvesuviana railway to the immediate south of Piazza Garibaldi. This would provide an area for the buses currently congesting Piazza Garibaldi, open the piazza up to its 'citizens' and improve its appearance for the sake of investors and tourists. In interview, the Forza Italia vice-president of the district argued that this project would only be effective if accompanied by greater police controls and the expulsion of all '*clandestini*':

> "The piazza must serve as a *bigliettino da visita* for all those who arrive by train. It cannot be left to the mercy of everyone. In Piazza Garibaldi, thanks to the lack of attention on the part of

the institutions, there are a series [long pause] of 'lobbies' who not only belong to Neapolitan organzied crime but to that [long pause]..of other countries. People who exit the station find themselves in the middle of a casbah. That's not Piazza Garibaldi. There's not a real commercial revival in the area because of the presence of so many *extracomunitari*, probably illegal in my opinion, who discourage both the Neapolitan and the citizen who comes from outside the city from investing in the area.." (interview with Carmine Barbuto 5/5/00)

The immigrant-*extracommunitario* is explicitly singled out as a non-citizen whose presence has transformed the very meaning of the piazza. Councillors and local figures define who constitutes the 'public' and the rightful users of the piazza. Drawing on personal or perceived sentiments of disorientation, fear and loss, they elaborate a public discourse about insecurity.

Through public campaigns and the local media, these 'moral entrepreneurs'[15] were able to forge a general consensus of opinion that the piazza was dangerous, unappetizing to locals and visitors and that, of all the groups present, immigrants were the principal hazard. This strongly affected the administration's attitude. For instance, following a series of complaints at the end of 1999, Massimo Paolucci, Assessor for Mobility (in other words responsible for traffic and buses), declared: "the [immigrant] situation is terrible and we'll have to find some solution" (*Corriere del Mezzogiorno* 2/12/99). The administration was pressurized to step up controls in the piazza for its *citizens*. In interview, Raffaele Tecce, Assessor for Normality, explains:

"A feeling of insecurity which has formed among the population has certainly had a role. The administration obviously has sensors and these are the letters it receives (which are many) and the district council. Of course they are not scientific instruments like opinion polls but in the past five years that I've been assessor I have continually received letters from citizens who complain above all about the street markets and traders. Today a wrong assimilation is made: street traders – *extracomunitari* – crime; and so the media has certainly captured a changing mood among people. Until five years ago, even though Piazza Garibaldi was chaotic and congested, it was nevertheless considered a vital piazza of the city. Today it is seen, in my opinion wrongly, as the centre of crime." (interview 2/6/00)

Interventions often responded to specific circumstances in the piazza itself and depended on the level of debates about immigration and security. For instance, following an intense public and media campaign at the end of 1999, in which every misdemeanour was placed under the microscope, an emergency meeting of the provincial committee for public order between the city's police forces, prefect and

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[15] Alessandro Dal Lago defines moral entrepreneurs as "a vanguard which assumes the task of rousing a passive and ignorant public opinion" (1999: 64).

administration decided to drastically increase police controls in the piazza. This led to the positioning of a carabinieri *stazione mobile* on the south side of the piazza and a municipal police camper van in front of the station.

There have been few voices against this tide of opinion. Catholic charitable organizations provide the only form of emergency assistance in the area, although the *Caritas* drop-in centre in the station only accomodates Italian homeless (immigrants are able to use canteen facilities in the *centro antico*) and representatives very rarely enter into debates about the piazza. Only the CGIL trade union, whose regional headquarters is located to the immediate north of the piazza, has been accorded (limited) space in media debates on Piazza Garibaldi. The spokesperson in these cases is the regional leader Michele Gravano and not the head of the immigration service, Jamal Qaddorah, and therefore while pleas are made for sensitive social policies and fairer treatment of immigrants, these always coincide with calls for stricter police controls, crime prevention measures and public-private investments to encourage the economic revival of the area. Behind the lines, Qaddorah has participated in numerous public committees to draw up projects for the piazza but complains that the more ambitious ideas, such as the opening of subways, have never got off the ground:

> "Three years ago there was this project which would have changed the whole face of Piazza Garibaldi but not a single thing has been done. Despite the fact that we got together with ASCOM, FS, Naples Council, everything became evasive..The question of the subways needs to be readdressed. But the revival of the piazza does not mean moving irregular immigrants or *clandestini* to another part of the city just to keep them out of sight..The *degrado* in the piazza has existed for years. The immigrants have nothing to do with it. They haven't created the traffic or the smog. People come up with the same old story that they become drug dealers or prostitutes but do you really think that these weren't around before immigrants arrived?" (interview 23/3/00).

There were isolated cases of collaboration between immigrant groups and the administration. The anti-racist political association '*3 Febbraio*', which set up base in a street off Piazza Garibaldi at the end of 1999, and the Senegalese Association, whose headquarters is located on the piazza itself, pressurized the administration to sort out the position of street traders. This group was the most affected by police controls. In May 2000, Raffaele Tecce, under pressure from people within his own party (Communist Refoundation), reproposed the idea of an 'inter-ethnic' market[16]. This was to be situated

[16] Between 26/5/00 and 15/6/00, I attended all the meetings and debates over the market in the city hall, CGIL and in the district council of San Lorenzo-Vicaria.

in Via Bologna, a side street off the northern edge of the piazza, with licensed places for seventy immigrants. The conditions were a regular permit to stay and the commitment to trading products from the immigrant's country of origin which were compatible with tourism (although it was not clear who of the 500 or so immigrants were to be assigned a place and what constituted "indigenous products"). During the subsequent debates with immigrant representatives, the CGIL and political organizations, doubts were raised over the location. The street's importance as a base of wholesale distribution for immigrants would be compromised while the lack of prior consultation with residents risked damaging the working relationship that the mainly Senegalese had formed over the last decade. The assessor insisted that the most important thing was to start immediately and promised that more markets would follow. The plan was, however, opposed at the district council meeting of San Lorenzo-Vicaria (with only one vote in favour from a Communist Refoundation councillor with the centre left abstaining fearing residents' unrest). Instead, a provocative counter proposal of the far-right Fiamma Tricolore-MSI to relocate the market in Piazza Plebiscito was passed (by the centre right plus two votes from the centre-left parties PPI and SDI).

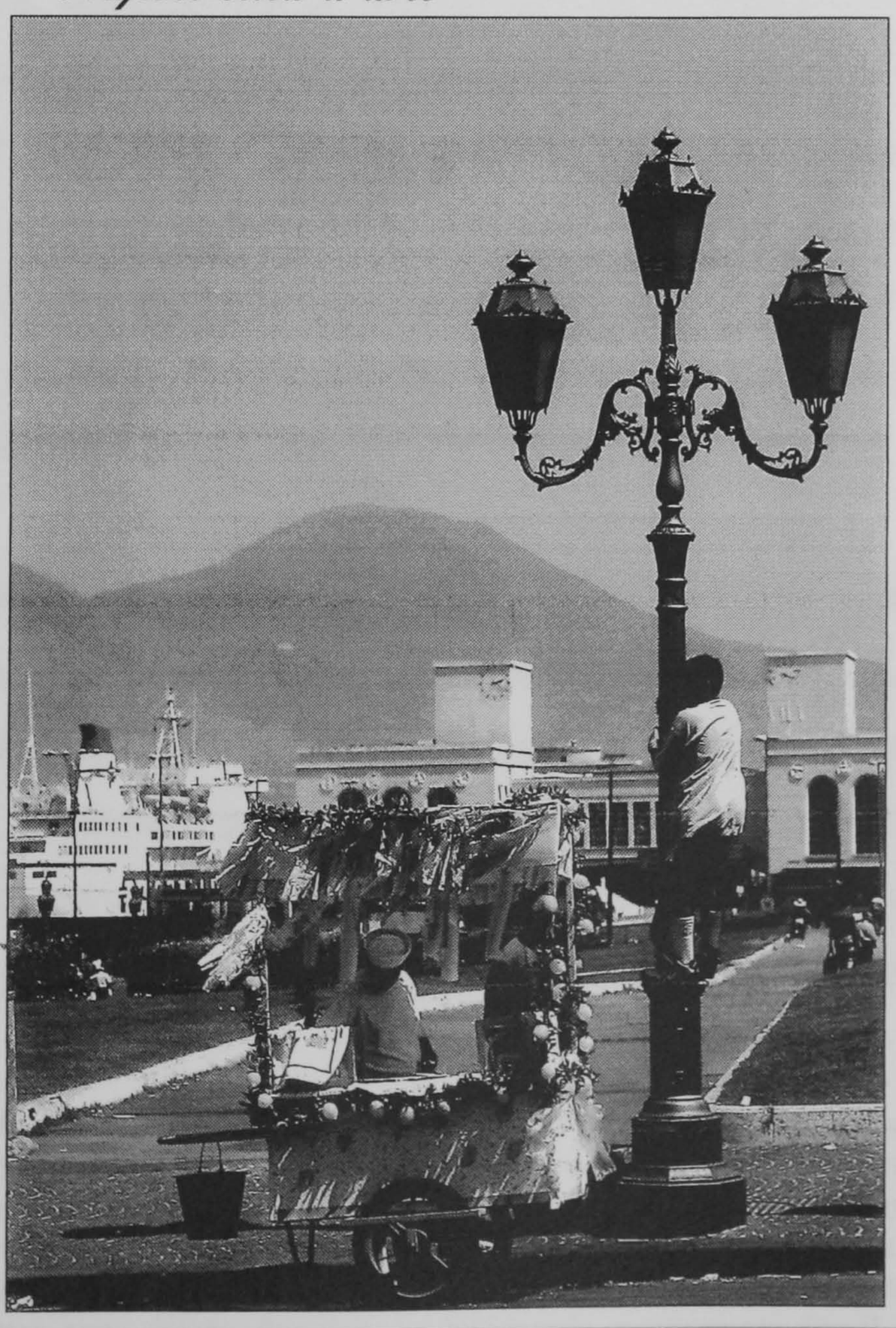
> "The district council of San Lorenzo-Vicaria,..given that..Vicaria is one of the most degraded areas of the city, with a worrying presence of an arrogant and diffuse *microcriminalità*, drug addicts, dealers, prostitutes and mixed-up immigrants; that the presence of a market would increase the ghettoization of an area which should represent the city's *biglietto da visita*; proposes that the street market for immigrants be located in Via Petrarca, Piazza del Plebiscito, Posillipo or the Chiaia-San Ferdinando neighbourhood." (Order of the Day 15/6/00).

With only consultative powers, the district council could not block the plan but it reflected the consensual sentiments over the piazza. Despite protests by a small group of residents, hoteliers and district councillors, the street market opened at the end of July 2000[17]. While the market was a courageous act in the face of a hostile 'public', its impact was limited. It was much smaller than originally planned, others have not followed and, significantly, it was located *off* Piazza Garibaldi. This isolated attempt at challenging public opinion and addressing a situation of conflict was still bound to a need to legitimate the immigrant presence which was exemplified by the assessor's insistence on 'indigenous products'. Therefore, while individual members of the

[17] During a road block, some residents demanded that the market at least be moved to the parallel and much wider Corso Novara. As John Foot notes, in his study of clashes over immigrants in Turin: "micro-conflicts often involve a simple request that the 'problem' be moved elsewhere, perhaps even a few hundred yards away" (2000: 16).

administration attempted to integrate immigrants into projects of urban renewal or. like Bassolino, disputed simplistic links between immigrants and crime (*Corriere del Mezzogiorno* 4/11/99), the general political slant did not contest, but rather often confirmed, the widely held view that immigrants posed a (or *the*) problem for a permanent improvement of the piazza.

Napoli città d'arte



3.7a. and 3.7b. Postcard images of Neapolitan street traders. 3.7a.: "Naples – Mergellina. The characteristic stall of an oyster seller" (1990s). 3.7b: "Lemon drink seller, Naples, Italy" (1990s)

8.3 Media representations

The local media played a fundamental role in constructing a consensual vision of Piazza Garibaldi. They transmitted the 'primary definitions' of hoteliers and politicians and framed representations of the area through a simplification and dramatization of its problems. The piazza was conceived as a strategic place in the city's revival ("*il biglietto da visita*") and, simultaneously, as a marginal space in the grip of social and urban turmoil ("*degrado*"), while real and imagined problems were directly equated with the presence of immigrants.

Following political debates over stricter legislation and national alarms in response to the arrival of '*clandestini*' at the beginning of the 1990s, the Italian media's representation of immigation was increasingly determined by 'common sense' arguments such as the link between immigrants and rising levels of crime. As numerous studies have discovered, the majority of immigration news during the decade were concerned with conflicts with the host society (Cotesta et al. 1999: 393) or with crime and law and order (Dal Lago 1999: 71), while only a tiny proportion concern incidents of racism or injustice directed at foreigners. The fact that racist attacks were often blamed on the victims or used to confirm dominant negative definitions of immigration, undelines the need to critically foreground the ways in which consensus and social representations are constructed (ibid.: 15).

National debates on immigration have been reproduced and reshaped in the Neapolitan press in relation to a smaller geographical area (Naples and Campania). By the very nature of local news (Murialdi 1982: 225), there has been a greater emphasis on specific places (such as Piazza Garibaldi), an ongoing relationship with particular individuals (such as Mario Pagliari) and a more immediate access to local institutions[18]. But while there continues to be a particular slant on the issue – for instance immigrants' links with

[18] Readers' letters referring to the state of particular places measure and reconfirm the significance which such spaces are given in urban debates. On average, one letter a month regarding Piazza Garibaldi was printed in *il Mattino* between 1998 and 1999. These were almost entirely negative accounts and usually (if not always) made some form of reference to immigrants. However, unlike the tradition of letter writing in the British press, there is usually no clear correlation between public events and readers' correspondence and the latter very rarely function to "stimulate controversy [and] provoke public response" (Hall et al 1978: 121), unless in extraordinary circumstances as in the case of Mario Pagliari's letter to Bassolino.

the Camorra – the local media do not substantially diverge in their reporting of immigration. The city does not possess a newspaper like the national left wing *Manifesto* which politically supports the plight of immigrants or a publication like the Northern League's *La Padania* which openly uses crude racist language.

Some of the early reports in the Neapolitan press drew on the curiosity factor and the coincidental accumulation of stories would warrant closer attention. In November 1980 one of the first discussions in *il Mattino* on the non-Western foreign presence in Naples followed in the wake of reports during the previous days of a robbery involving North Africans and the discovery of a Somalian who had starved to death in the port. The signs of a growing interest were cut short by a more extraordinary event: during the evening Naples was hit by an earthquake and over the next few years very little was written on the subject of "coloured workers". At the beginning of the 1990s, as immigration rapidly became an issue of public debate, there was a general consensus that Naples did not suffer the problems of other cities: "Naples is not like Florence[19]" (*il Mattino* 23/3/90), "Naples does not show signs of intolerance. It's true that there are many immigrants and their numbers are increasing" (*la Repubblica* 15/4/90). During this period most of the local media's attention was directed at a series of racist attacks and murders in the agricultural area in the nearby province of Caserta

Certain 'unpolitically correct' expressions widely used in the 1980s and early 1990s have since been dropped ("chocolate coloured skin", "negro"), or have gone out of fashion ("*vu' cumprà*"[20]), as the basic vocabulary has been whittled down to apparently neutral sounding terms such as "*extracomunitario*" and "*clandestino*". As pointed out above, this quasi-legal jargon ultimately reinforces images of immigrants as outsiders. At the same time, immigrants are generally divided into positive (regular, 'integrated', well-behaved, unthreatening) and negative (irregular, uncontrollable, undefinable, criminal) categories. These binary divisions and brandings comply with the way in which immigrants are socially constructed. In the following extract, the right wing newspaper *Il Giornale di Napoli* describes the celebration of the end of Ramadan in Piazza Mercato which brings together muslims from across the region.

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[19] Florence hit the headlines in spring 1990 following a series of violent assaults on immigrants.
[20] "*Vu' cumprà*" was supposed to be a literal transcription of a North African pronunciation of the words "vuoi comprare?" ("do you want to buy?"). Once used to label all immigrants, the term is occasionally resurrected in the Neapolitan press in news stories involving West African street traders.

"Yesterday the whole neighbourhood warmly greeted the Islamic feast: from the district councillors of Alleanza Nazionale and the teachers of the Oriental Institute [equivalent of SOAS] who did not want to miss the annual appointment to neighbours, both young and old, who were by no means frightened by the Arab "invasion". An invasion which, apart from Ramadan, is repeated every two weeks when the more "wealthy" faithful organize communal dinners for their poor brothers." ("Allah a Piazza Mercato" *il Giornale di Napoli* 19/1/99)

The ceremony is appreciated as an 'authentic' cultural attraction. The fact that locals want to be in the piazza to share the experience raises the common theme in the local media of Neapolitans' inherent tolerance. However, this positive depiction is still bound by a dominant 'negative' frame. The 'invasion' (usually used to censure the uncontrolled influx of *clandestini*) of 'Arabs' (normally considered prey to fundamentalist positions) in this case is unthreatening because the temporary religious function does not assume ascendency over daily indigenous uses of the space. Positive representations of immigration, which amount to a tiny minority of news reports[21], tend to focus on its cultural contributions (such as religion, cuisine and traditional festivals) to an emergent 'multicultural' society. The idea of 'multiculturalism', however conceived (in the case of the local press it is often used to reflect Naples' openness), is nevertheless subordinate to a hegemonic discourse which defines immigration in terms of numbers, crime rates and citizens' feelings of security. This is reiterated by the fact that the greatest proportion of news on immigration is to be found in the '*cronaca*' and not the '*cultura*' pages of the press.

Up until the early 1990s the concentration of immigrants around Piazza Garibaldi was not a cause for public concern. During the heated debates surrounding the proposed Martelli law in 1989 and 1990, attention turned to immigrants in the station area. Overcrowded hotels (but not the piazza) were described as ghettoes after they were raided by police (*la Repubblica* 15/4/90), although sympathy was expressed for immigrants who were considered the victims of unscrupulous hotel-keepers (*il Mattino* 17/4/90). There was also a growing insistence on the link between immigrants and crime ("Camorristi with black skin" *il Mattino* 23/3/90; "Blacks are not always the victims" *il Mattino* 25/4/90). But while some reports saw immigrants as having an

[21] Of the 11,300 articles studied between 1991 and 1997 in five regioal newspapers (*il Corriere della Sera*, *il Resto del Carlino*, *La Nazione*, *il Messaggero* and *il Mattino*) only 8% regarded cultural and social events involving immigrants and 5% concerned moments of cooperation or solidarity between Italians and immigrants (Cotesta et al. 1999: 393).

adverse impact on the environment and often employed a style of language which was later to become dominant, the piazza itself was not considered under threat. After the G7 summit, immigration and Piazza Garibaldi became constant and connected topics of news. For instance, during the second half of 1999, over 90% of articles about immigration in Naples in the local pages of *il Mattino* concerned the station area[22]. Conversely, almost 70% of news regarding Piazza Garibaldi over the same period made some form of reference to the presence of immigrants, even if the central subject was about new parking arrangements or changes to the bus services. Articles on immigrants in Piazza Garibaldi in each of the three newspapers analysed (*il Mattino*, *la Repubblica* and *il Corriere del Mezzogiorno*) vary from short notices with the odd comment (as in the case of arrests or disturbances) to long 'investigations' or campaigns carried out over a number of days. Some reports were linked with specific events – for instance criminal acts or deaths – while others were incorporated into general descriptions of the city such as the comments on the state of the city when Neapolitans return en masse from their Summer holidays at the end of August.

The slant of news can usually be ascertained from the topographical layout of articles. The content and position of headlines and images are accurate clues to the newsworthy angle of a story and the pivots around which topics are defined (Hall et al. 1978: 89). For instance, the format of an article in *la Repubblica* (22/6/94), which reports the prefect's inspection of work in Piazza Garibaldi for the G7 and the journalist's investigation into the street trader situation in the area, immediately relays the central issues [**fig. 3.8.**]. The main headline "G7: the suk that's got to go" sets up a clear opposition between the preparations for a restyled city and the piazza's unacceptable present appearance. This opposition is repeated in separate subtitles "appointment with the world" and "fight against 10,000 street traders". A final title on the right summarizes the content of the article: "Neapolitans and foreigners: trip through the illegal world which from today the council will try to eliminate". The titles do not, therefore, refer explicitly to immigrants but the main photograph of the single black hawker removes any doubt as to the main issue of the report. A second image of ceremonial guards is rather meaningless in itself (no such sentries were ever used during the summit) but becomes significant through its juxtaposition with the titles and the

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[22] This excludes the coverage of the arson attacks on Roma camps in the northern suburb of Scampia in July and August.

picture of the immigrant. It reiterates the central opposition between the desired image of an orderly city and the unwanted presence of certain individuals. The summary below the headline locates the report to the station area and underlines the newsworthy elements: there are more traders than the council's previous estimates (which warrants the investigation and the continuation of the story over a second day), while the difficulties faced by organizers ("not even the work for the G7 has managed to get rid of them") creates a sense of drama and urgency. Alternative voices are introduced (local left parties who insist on the provision of markets for the traders) which increases the controversial nature of the story but these do not contest the dominant representation of Piazza Garibaldi as a place which needs to be ordered.

In a full-page article in the same paper four years later (*la Repubblica* 20/5/98 [**fig. 3.9.**]), reference to immigrants is confined to the main text of the report. The layout still serves to frame the dominant definitions about the piazza. The headline "New Piazza Garibaldi. 'Away with the buses: here's the plan'" is positioned beneath the central image showing two tourists struggling through traffic. The suggestion is that they will be the beneficiaries of the "new" piazza. On the right are the photographs and quotations of "the protagonists" (Bassolino and Pagliari). These are the definers of the situation. On the left is a picture of the assessor who responds by announcing a project for the piazza. In the article itself, the initial discussion of the proposed removal of buses digresses into a description of the piazza and ends with the definition of the area as a "black enclave" where original residents are fleeing: "They sell just to sell and to escape". In other cases, the link with immigrants is made explicit. For instance, a report in *Corriere del Mezzogiorno* (4/5/00) about increased police controls in the piazza leads with the headline "The prefect fortifies Piazza Garibaldi" [**fig. 3.10.**]. A subtitle announces that "particular attention will paid to *extracomunitari*", while the photograph of the municipal policeman checking the boot of a (black) immigrant's car alludes to the rigour of the controls; suggesting that nothing will be hidden from the eyes of the law.

As far as the langauge of texts is concerned, one of the most salient aspects is the way in which the disordered flurry of the piazza is racialized. Terms such as "suk" and "bazaar" are regularly used to describe the visual impact on visitors to the area. Similar terms have also been traditionally used to stigmatize the city's *quartieri popolari*, especially where the Camorra is strong. Hence Forcella is nicknamed the 'Casbah'.

However, after 1994, expressions have been repeatedly used to distinguish Piazza Garibaldi from traditional 'oleographic' images of central Naples: "miniature Africa" (*la Repubblica* 27/10/96), "the world of Iusuf" (*la Repubblica* 19/5/98), "multiracial chaos" (*la Repubblica* 20/5/98), "frontier zone swarming with people of every race" (*il Mattino* 12/9/99), "the dirty face of Naples" (*il Mattino* 3/5/00), "babel" (*ibid*), "African bidonville" (*Corriere del Mezzogiorno* 3/5/2000).

A 'public idiom' replete with metaphors, allusions and simple stereotypes is used to make sense of the piazza[23]. This can be illustrated by examining a description of a Sunday gathering of East Europeans in front of the station entitled "The Sunday meeting: five thousand *extracomunitari* exchange "parcels", embraces and letters" (*Corriere del Mezzogiorno* 1/12/99 [**fig. 3.11.**]). This was written by a senior journalist, Carlo Franco, who had written for *il Mattino* during the 1970s and 1980s, in other words an 'authoritative voice' on Neapolitan issues. His piece was part of a week-long campaign on Piazza Garibaldi which started with news on hoteliers' patrols in the city centre and later led to a meeting of police forces to discuss law and order in the city centre (which, it was hoped, would include Piazza Garibaldi). The article opens with a commonsensical image of Piazza Garibaldi: "it is the doorway to the city which has fallen into disrepute". The piazza's centrality has produced "negative functions" by becoming a meeting place for immigrants and a site of criminal and illegal activities. Here, immigrants are the main focus of attention, for it is they who change the very meaning of the piazza: "it's no longer the first image of Naples". The initial impact of "four to five thousand immigrants" on exiting the station is "awesome". While a Sunday crowd of Neapolitans and tourists of similar proportions in Piazza Plebiscito would be welcomed, in Piazza Garibaldi the throng becomes a menace. Franco sets up a basic opposition between 'us' and 'them' which translates to Neapolitans (and tourists) versus immigrants. He uses the first person plural: "our account" and "we feel as if we're being watched". This might be because he has not come alone (which would suggest an element of danger) but, whatever the case, it enables him to speak on behalf of the city's indigenous inhabitants:

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[23] Roger Fowler defines 'public idiom' as "the negotiation of a style with which targetted readers feel comfortable, and which allows writers [a] band of flexibility..The familiarity of a habitual style has ideological consequences: it allows the unnoticed expression of familiar thoughts. The establishment of this 'normal' style is fundamental to the building of an assumption of consensus" (Fowler 1991: 48).

"Why do all the races of the world meet in piazza Garibaldi? To answer this mystery, we spent a day in the piazza where we had the extraordinary experience of feeling foreigners in a city which we thought to know like the back of our hands."

The image of the piazza is encoded into a form of language which reiterates its aberrant otherness: "plague" and "a sort of little Saigon". Piazza Garibaldi, piazza only in name, is presented as a sort of open wound. When immigrants leave at the end of the day "they let themselves be swallowed up by the immense city". In other words, the issue is the assembly of immigrants *in* Piazza Garibaldi, and not their presence in Naples (which is portrayed as an indomitable beast).

The investigation serves to answer a series of questions: "what jobs do they do, what circles do they frequent?". The fact that "no one, unfortunately, will ever know" allows the journalist to make a number of presumptions. The exchange of packages raises suspicions: "a trade which seems incredible"; this already being raised in the headline where the word parcel is placed in inverted commas. No distinction is made between irregular and regular immigrants. Their presence in Piazza Garibaldi makes them all '*clandestini*' and therefore they have no legitimate claim to the space. The commercial activities are "naturally unlawful". The collective use of the makeshift postal service and market in the middle of the piazza raise fears that somewhere the Russian and Albanian mafia have a hand in the matter. While "nobody controls and nobody tries to understand the hidden dangers", the piazza is at the same time subject to a more sinister power.

The piazza is also a promiscuous space which seems to both lure and disturb the journalist. The younger women – nubile bodies with "breathtakingly high minskirts" – are no longer in the grasp of Italian men who have been ousted by rival 'ethnic' philanderers. The allusion to prostitution is explicit: the women wear heavy make-up and kisses are conducted with "excessive enthusiasm". This is reiterated in the journalist's final climax: "everything and everybody become exchangeable goods". But the presence of so many women autonomously assembled in public space, distant and unattainable, is at the same time a threat. This image bears semblance to the British tabloid press's portrayal of the Greenham Common peace protests in the 1980s where groups of women protesters were represented as "out-of-place", while the air base, objectively an eyesore, became part of a "taken-for-granted landscape" (Cresswell

1996: 132). Similarly, the (ugly) Piazza Garibaldi, recast as a pleasant gateway, is disturbed by hordes of foreign women.

Therefore, an apparently neutral inquiry into the goings-on of Piazza Garibaldi is, from the beginning to the end, structured by power relations based around gender and (non)personhood. What the journalist 'sees' is translated into a consensual argument which links immigrants to the negative conditions in the piazza.

In the following day's edition of the paper, the same journalist 'returns' to gather the views of hoteliers and shopkeepers "besieged" by immigrants and "*degrado*". The unpleasant sights (and smells) of the previous article are intertwined within a new narrative about the plight of indigenous users. An unambiguous heading is employed: "How can Piazza Garibaldi be saved?". Important figures are chosen and each is accorded a photograph: Mario Pagliari, Michele Cotuogno the owner of Hotel Cavour who has "never left the trench", the heroic chemist who stays open at night, a bona fide Neapolitan pastry maker who threatens to close up shop and a young successful businesswoman who feels abandoned by her public representatives at ASCOM. Under a subtitle "This is what we think", their responses are summarized. All call for more controls and commitment from the administration towards the problem of Piazza Garibaldi.

The description of the piazza and the legitimation given to 'moral entrepreneurs' is by no means an isolated example. Paradigms raised by the veteran journalist are commonly used by the local media to interpet the piazza: it is a space of urban decay, invaded by outsiders, an obstacle to tourism, crime-infested and dangerous. Carlo Franco's description of Piazza Garibaldi resembles Matilde Serao's chronicles of the 'bowels' of nineteenth-century Naples but is devoid of the philanthropic guiding spirit. On other occasions, journalists employ parody and sarcasm to heighten the drama:

> "Greetings from the casbah! No this isn't the Medina of Tunis or the market in Algiers but Piazza Garibaldi, one of the postcards of Naples reduced to a wretched fair of street stalls. It's easy to imagine what sort of impression this had on the middle-aged Austrian tourist and his buxom wife who arrived yesterday with the overnight train." ("Casbah" *il Mattino* 15/9/99)

The Northern European tourists unwittingly get off the train in the wrong continent. The colourful description in *il Mattino* in 1963 of a Piazza Garibaldi-by-night populated

with virtuous deviants now appears a comical anomaly of history. The space is no longer conceived as quintessentially Neapolitan. The nocturnal piazza is unanimously labelled an "*inferno*" while the situation hardly improves during the daytime.

On rare occasions, Piazza Garibaldi is used to represent the 'experience' of immigration in Naples. It is therefore the place where journalists go to carry out general observational analysis (what they eat, what they wear, what they sell) and gather opinions on new legislation ("The immigrants of Piazza Garibaldi judge the government's new norms" *La Repubblica* 16/2/97). Direct dealings with immigrants have primarily occurred with the established North and West African communities resident in the area. The East Europeans are less 'monitored' because they are not permanently present in the piazza, while the Chinese remain an 'invisible' phenomenon (most news concerns the discovery of illegal clothes factories in the provincial towns). Immigrants have no control in this public sphere and are at the mercy of the journalists' discretion who often adopt a 'smash and grab' approach. Most reports disclose a fleeting encounter with the immigrant world: "the trip round on a Vespa" (*La Repubblica* 22/6/94) or "let's pop over to Piazza Garibaldi" (*La Repubblica* 16/2/97).

The limited influence of the immigrant's voice is exemplified during the public reaction in May 2000 to the police's arrest and assault of Abdou, a Senegalese street trader, who had resisted the attempted confiscation of his merchandise. This event which took place in Vomero and was uninteresting in itself, became newsworthy because locals had intervened to defend the street trader, one of whom was arrested and spent a night in jail with the immigrant. Indeed, the pivot of the press's reporting of the story, which spanned four days, was Massimo: the civil-minded, honest and hard-working Neapolitan who immediately went to the defence of the unjustly treated Abdou. To add to the drama, the issue was also politicized. The left parties declared solidarity with Abdou and Massimo and censured the police's violence, while the right wing opposition unconditionally defended the police force and called for a clampdown on illegal commercial activities. Amidst the controversy, two journalists from *la Repubblica* turned their attention to Piazza Garibaldi in order to investigate immigrants' trade in counterfeit items ("The Senegalese vendor buys counterfeit goods at the station" *la Repubblica* 19/5/00). They interview the president of the Senegalese Association, Pape Seck, who explains that 300,000 lire (£100) is given to new arrivals to help set them on

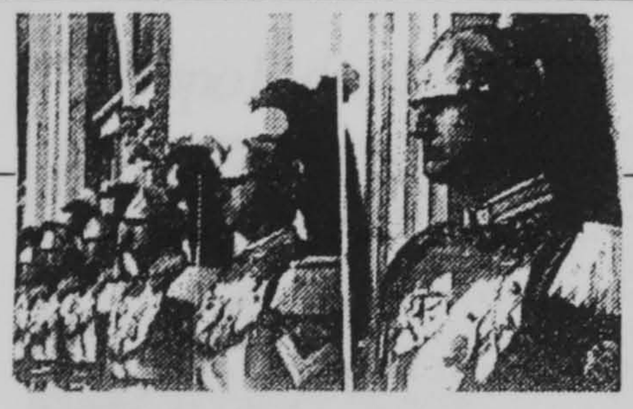
their way. He confirms that most buy their goods from the wholesalers around Piazza Garibaldi, to which the journalists add: "most of them counterfeit brands". From 'civil' Vomero and police brutality, attention switches to immigration, illegality and Piazza Garibaldi.

Pape Seck wrote a letter of complaint to the newspaper, claiming that the article had insinuated the Senegalese Association's complicity with illegal commercial activities:

> "I therefore ask you to rectify the way in which you described the position of our association which firmly rejects all illicit activities as well as every racist attempt to marginalize one of the communities which is collaborating most with our city to create a peaceful and tolerant multi-ethnic society." (letter dated 19/5/00, copy given to me by Pape Seck in interview).

This letter was not published nor was there any form of public or private response from the journalists. In spite of his references to "our city", Pape Seck had no public means of contesting the misinterpretation of his words.

This was not the case of a conspiracy on the part of the local media aimed at silencing the voices of immigrants: they simply were not included in the construction of consensual representations of Piazza Garibaldi. The press works through and builds on the primary definitions of politicians, local public figures and the police. Dominant definitions command the field of signification relatively unchallenged (Hall et al. 1978: 69). Because the situation in Piazza Garibaldi is already considered dramatic, there is little concern for setting up alternative viewpoints. Immigrants are unable to 'balance' primary definitions, even though they may possess a deeper knowledge or offer a different opinion about the piazza. As non-citizens, they forfeit their "rights of reply" (ibid.). Just as there were no serious attempts in the local press to account for immigrant experiences, there was very little interest to understand the contextual reasons for their presence in the piazza. For instance, in March 2000, two Polish males died inside the station after the parked railway carriage they were sleeping in caught fire. The tragedy was blamed on a lit cigarette and the drunken state of the two men. During the media frenzy that followed not one of the local centre-left newspapers dealt with the severe housing crisis facing immigrants. Rather, the ultimate 'victim' of Piazza Garibaldi was the image of Naples.



appuntamento con il mondo

G7, ecco il suk da cancellare

Lotta a diecimila ambulanti

OLTRE trecento venditori neri in via Bologna, duecento in via Firenze, altre centinaia tutt'intorno alla Ferrovia. In corso Garibaldi decine di biondi polacchi e poi un serpentone di bancarelle che attraversa il Rettifilo, via Toledo e un dedalo di strade e vicoli.

Ecco il *suk* partenopeo. Diecimila ambulanti extracomunitari e napoletani che ogni mattina invadono il centro riuscendo a mettere in piedi un giro di affari di decine di milioni. Diecimila persone, non mille come ritenevano fino a ieri a Palazzo San Giacomo, che da stamane dovranno liberare strade e marciapiedi.

Nemmeno i cantieri del G7 sono riusciti a rimuoverli, ma ora ci prova il Comune con un'ordinanza firmata ieri pomeriggio dall'assessore al commercio Amato Lamberti. Un provvedimento 'consigliato' dal prefetto Umberto Improta e ora contestato da Rifondazione comunista e dai Verdi che chiedono, prima di allontanare gli ambulanti, che sia approvato un piano per i venditori *on the road* napoletani e stranieri.

Diecimila ambulanti (molti gli immigrati) da rimuovere in vista del G7. Al centro **un'ispezione del prefetto Improta, toni duri**

Napoli

Napoletani e stranieri: viaggio attraverso gli "abusivi" che da oggi il Comune tenterà di eliminare

3.8. "G7: the suk that's got to go" (*la Repubblica* 22/6/94)

la Repubblica
mercoledì 20 maggio 1998

la città che cambia

Dopo la denuncia degli albergatori e le promesse del sindaco, l'assessore spiega il progetto

Piazza Garibaldi. A destra, la Stazione con i turisti. Sotto, l'assessore Paolucci

I PROTAGONISTI

BASSOLINO

Consapevole dei problemi anche se rimane una zona difficile, ma non esageriamo...

PAGLIARI

Questo è un problema da risolvere: in questa zona occorre più attenzione...

Nuova Piazza Garibaldi "Via i bus: ecco il piano"

3.9. "New Piazza Garibaldi. 'Away with the buses: here's the plan'" (*la Repubblica* 20/5/98)

Da domani tutta zona della stazione sarà presidiata dalle forze dell'ordine. Particolare attenzione agli extracomunitar

Il prefetto blinda piazza Garibaldi

Scatta il piano contro la criminalità: due camper mobili di polizia e vigili urban

Controlli dei vigili urbani in piazza Garibaldi

3.10. "The prefect fortifies Piazza Garibaldi" (*Corriere del Mezzogiorno* 4/5/00)

IL REPORTAGE

Il raduno della domenica: cinquemila extracomunitari si scambiano «pacchi», abbracci e missive

NAPOLI — *Il racconto di piazza Garibaldi è l'ultimo capitolo della «peste» metropolitana del terzo millennio. La porta della città affonda nel degrado e ha perduto la sua identità: non è più la «prima» immagine di Napoli e non assolve alla funzione di grande raccordo della viabilità urbana ed extraurbana. Un fallimento, insomma, che ha «prodotto» una serie di funzioni negative. E la nascita di iniziative come le «volanti civili» che, magari, potrebbero essere anche anche apprezzabili, ma sono, comunque il sintomo di una situazione non governata democraticamente, nella quale ognuno fa la sua parte e non c'è bisogno che il cittadino si «vesta» da poliziotto.*

Il nostro racconto comincia alle 7,30 di una domenica qualsiasi (noi abbiamo scelto l'ultima del mese), quando tutte le razze del mondo si danno appuntamento sotto le pensiline della stazione. O dietro la grande statua o nei vicoli del ventre più malato, al corso Arnaldo Lucci, al Vasto e a Porta Nolana. In queste ore la piazza grande diventa la sterminata retrovia di un popolo in fuga e al colmo della disperazione. Una sorta di piccola Saigon, forse addirittura più feroce e , soprattutto, più permissiva: scippi, rapine, aggressioni ai turisti e ai passanti, tutto è consentito e tutto avviene perchè i controlli sono rari se non inesistenti. E dove chi passa è esposto a grossi rischi personali.

Il raduno inizia all'alba e si scioglie al tramonto, quando gli extracomunitari se ne vanno e si lasciano «ingoiare» dalla città sterminata.

Sopra e a sinistra, i gruppi di immigrati radunatisi di domenica mattina in piazza Garibaldi (foto Luciano Ferrara)

Che lavoro fanno, quali ambienti frequentano? Nessuno lo saprà mai, purtroppo. La maggior parte di queste persone svolge lavori puliti, ma il sospetto che dietro la massa silenziosa si muovano colossali interessi illegali è molto forte e meriterebbe un'attenzione più severa.

Perchè tutte le razze del mondo si ritrovano a piazza Garibaldi? Per rispondere a questo interrogativo abbiamo vissuto una esperienza straordinaria e per un giorno ci siamo sentiti stranieri nella città che ritenevamo di conoscere fin nelle pieghe più remote. Quando usciamo dalla «direttissima» lo scenario è impressionante: quattro-cinquemila persone, in maggioranza polacchi, ma anche ucraini, moldavi, albanesi e slavi. Che si mettono in fila per ritirare il «pacco» spedito dalle famiglie lontane e per inviare a casa i soldi evitando qualsiasi controllo. Qualcuno si abbraccia, qualche altro bacia la fidanzata con un entusiasmo eccessivo, qualche altro ancora compra i giornali polacchi da un edicolante naturalmente abusivo. A svolgere il lavoro di posta provvedono corrieri, altrettanto clandestini , che hanno conquistato centinaia di clienti stabilendo con ognuno un rapporto che è anche di amicizia, oltre che di fiducia.

L'attesa della lettera è l'aspetto più struggente di questa storia: le notizie, come i soldi che gli extracomunitari mandano a casa, seguono un improbabile percorso. «Ma arrivano sempre», assicura chi conosce le regole di un «traffico» che ha dell'incredibile. A dirigere le operazioni sono gli autisti di centinaia di mezzi di trasporto – vecchi bus dai colori sgargianti, furgoni che stanno in piedi per scommessa e perfino autovetture che dovrebbero andare al macero e che, invece ,vanno su e giù dalla Polonia a Napoli. Nessuno controlla e nessuno cerca di capire il pericolo che potrebbe nascondersi dietro questo scambio frenetico di merci e di missive. Abbiamo l'impressione che tutte le operazioni siano dirette da un «occhio» misterioso e invisibile e questa sensazione la proviamo anche sulla nostra pelle: ci sentiamo scrutati, osservati, seguiti. L'«occhio» al quale ci riferiamo, evidentemente, è l'aspetto più inquietante della storia. Dietro la normalità dello scambio, però, potrebbe nascondersi dell'altro. I mezzi che arrivano dalla Polonia sono pieni anche di viaggiatori: fino a qualche mese fa chi doveva venire a Napoli utilizzava la linea di trasporto ufficiale che ora ha perduto quasi tutti clienti, nonostante continui ad avere uno spazio riservato nella piazza e ad esporre la tabella con gli orari delle corse. I sospetti sono legittimi: la mafia russa e quella albanese hanno messo radici nel contesto criminale europeo ed italiano ed hanno progetti di grande espansione che la camorra potrebbe in qualche modo «favorire» prestando i suoi uomini e i suoi potentissimi mezzi. La stessa cosa, grosso modo, accadde negli anni Sessanta quando la camorra si alleò con i «marsigliesi» e con la mafia siciliana: le conseguenze per Napoli furono devastanti, perchè le forze dell'ordine non riuscirono ad arginare l'ondata. Oggi il contesto è ancora più drammatrico, guai a ripetere i vecchi errori.

Un primo «inserimento», comunque, c'è già stato. Nei punti più affollati della piazza i bancarellari hanno messo tende e la fanno da padroni, vendendo cianfrusaglie ma anche oggetti costosi e capi di abbigliamento.

«Si spende molto, vi posso garantire», dice il nostro informatore. In questo appuntamento si danno appuntamento anche gli ultimi cultori dell'«acchiappanza», ma il maschio napoletano pare che sia meno, come dire, «gradito» rispetto ai fusti magrebini che sono molto richiesti dalle ragazze slave che indossano vertiginose minigonne e sono truccatissime. In questo mondo tutto sotterraneo le etnie e le religioni si confondono e non c'è da stupirsi: tutto è merce che si può scambiare.

Carlo Franco

3.11. "The Sunday meeting: 5,000 *extracomunitari* exchange parcels, embraces and letters" (*Corriere del Mezzogiorno* 1/12/99)

Chapter 9: Mapping Immigrant Experiences in Piazza Garibaldi

The media's portrayal of Piazza Garibaldi relied almost entirely on the primary definitions of public figures. Secondary definers, such as the CGIL trade union, were rarely accorded space in debates unless they were directly involved in proposing improvements to the station area. Very little reference was made to statistics regarding the piazza apart from the (often unofficial) figures pronounced by local businessmen or hoteliers. Available statistical information is actually of very limited use. It is almost impossible to estimate the number of immigrants in the station area. Firstly, most use Piazza Garibaldi but live elsewhere. Secondly, the piazza is divided between three districts: San Lorenzo-Vicaria, Mercato-Pendino and Poggioreale-Zona Industriale which cover a large swathe of the *centro storico* and the east end of the city. Acording to the latest figures, there are less than 2,000 immigrants officially living in these districts (Comune di Napoli 1998) but this does not reflect the actual number of immigrant residents who might be registered elsewhere or who do not possess documents. Similarly, council records concerning local economic activities in the station refer to a much larger zone which comprises Piazza Mercato and Via Duomo to the west of Piazza Garibaldi. According to the assessor for Normality, Raffaele Tecce, there are approximately sixty registered immigrant businesses centred around Vasto and the northern edge of Piazza Garibaldi (interview 2/6/00). Significantly, such 'evidence' is never cited in media 'investigations' or public debates about the piazza.

At an academic level, there are few studies on immigrants' experiences of Italian cities. The only monographic quantitative study of immigration in Naples (Calvanese and Pugliese 1991), is based on surveys conducted by the Sociology Department of Naples University in the mid 1980s and is very dated. Although it is helpful in offering a reading of the employment situation in and around Naples, the research does not (intentionally) reveal anything about the socio-cultural relationship between immigrants and the urban environment. Qualitative studies based on empirical research are less frequent. One early example is Giuseppe Scidà's work on immigrants in Catania in the book *Stranieri in città* (Scidà and Pollini 1993). This research, as Scidà explains, "is directed at an understanding of the different cultures which coexist in Catania" (ibid.: 109). In other words, it is primarily a study of immigrants *in* the city and not of their perceptions *of* the city. This attempt to 'understand' immigration in an urban environment characterizes the research on Naples produced by the Geography

Department at the Oriental Institute (see Cattedra and Memoli 1992; F. Amato et al. 1995; Coppola and Memoli 1997; Coppola 1999; F. Amato 1999, 2000). This work, which draws on general observations and official data, has produced detailed maps of immigration in the city. Fabio Amato has written two short accounts of immigrants in Piazza Garibaldi based on month-long observations of street traders in the area (F. Amato 1992, 1997). The first study in 1992 concluded that the zone was undergoing a process of 'Africanization'. Observations were tested in a second inquiry in 1997 and the central argument was adjusted to account for the arrival of new groups (East Europeans and Chinese). Amato on both occasions admits the scientific limits of his descriptive surveys, claiming that they present a first stage prior to detailed analysis of what is a highly complex area (F. Amato 1997: 23). Although they are clearly limited in their scope (there is no reference to political and media debates and little discussion of non-economic uses of the space), the two pieces are important as historical reference points and, where appropriate, will be compared with the findings of my research [**maps 3.iii. and 3.iv.**].

A few accounts of Italian cities written from the viewpoints of immigrants have been published. However, care must be taken when evaluating this material. For instance, a young Tunisian intellectual's description of his trip through Italy in 1990 (Fortunato and Methnani 1990) was actually commissioned for a feature in the weekly magazine *Espresso* and was shadow written by one of its reporters, although this is not actually made clear in the subsequently published book. The picaresque description of Piazza Garibaldi at the beginning of the chapter on Naples has all the linguistic hallmarks of a media account of immigrant experience:

> "All the hotels around the stations were packed. Near Piazza Garibaldi the bars are populated entirely with North Africans. In one of these, two are arguing violently. From a stall which sells cassettes, a stereo plays Arab music at full volume..It feels like being in a big, incoherent bazaar." (ibid.: 38)

The aim of my fieldwork is not to 'explain' Piazza Garibaldi through a scientific dissection of its social and economic context nor does it intend to be representative of all immigrants in the area. Rather the aim is to open up points of view which are not usually available and to examine uses of the piazza. The fieldwork took place between January and June 2000 (after an initial period of observation and interviews around

Naples in 1999). Informants included both irregular and regular immigrants. The research is based on guided visits to the piazza with immigrants (a Pakistani (Madji): a Pole (Petra); a Guinean (Ousmanne) and a Senegalese (Diop)) which led to contact with other people in the piazza. Accounts of these visits, which lasted between one and five hours, were transcribed in detailed fieldnotes. In addition, tape-recorded interviews were separately conducted with various individuals who had a long-standing relationship with the piazza (for a discussion of approach and full list of informants see appendix).

All the African and Asian informants were male[24], while Poles and Ukrainians were predominantly female. Apart from the odd Senegalese and Pole in their fifties, informants were all aged between 25 and 40 years old. Many of the East European domestic workers met in the piazza were irregulars (*clandestini*) who were employed '*al nero*' (unofficial, cash in hand work) and were therefore not in a postion to regularize their position. Petra, a part-time domestic worker who attended every afternoon a 'cultural operator' course run by a social cooperative, had a *permesso di soggiorno* (permit to stay). Madji, the Pakistani, and Ousmanne, the Guinean, had both applied for documents and were waiting the outcome, while the majority of Senegalese, having been in Naples for longer periods (between five and ten years) possessed permits to stay or '*carte di soggiorno*' (see footnote 10). Each individual has a different migrancy project. Some intend to eventually return home, others plan to settle in Italy. The reason for coming to Naples, whether planned or unforseen, was usually determined by economic factors[25]. A Senegalese (Abdoul), employed as a technician and sales assistant in an Italian owned shop which sold goods in bulk to street traders, arrived in Naples seven years ago after a period of work in Milan.

"I came to Naples because here it was easier for an *extracomunitario clandestino* to find work. In Milan after having worked for a period, I found myself three weeks doing nothing. Back then I knew some Neapolitans who advised me to come down here, but I didn't know any Senegalese."

Petra claimed that while most of her Polish compatriots came to the city for the (limited) economic opportunities, she was drawn by her "curiosity" for Italy although

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[24] Although I was introduced to Senegalese women at a party organized in a hotel in Corso Novara, the majority of non-European immigrants in Piazza Garibaldi, apart from the Chinese, are male.
[25] The only exception was the head of the immigrant service at the CGIL, a Palestinian, who had come to Naples in 1981 as a political activist in the PLO to study at the university.

she ended up in Naples not by choice but because she found work through an Italian job agency based near her home town in Poland. Most of the Africans and Pakistanis worked as street traders or as porters for the nearby markets and wholesale stores. Some of the Senegalese worked (or had once worked in the case of Diop who was now the president of a 'multi-ethnic' association) in the shops in Vasto that were directly connected with the immigrant economy. All the Poles and Ukrainians were employed in the domestic or hotel sector. There were no Polish street traders in the station area compared with the mid-1990s when they had semi-permanent pitches on Corso Garibaldi (F. Amato 1997: 21). Some of the immigrants who were irregular or who had only lived in Naples hoped to move to the North to look for more stable forms of employment (such as Madji who as soon as he received his documents intended to join his brother in Bolzano), while most of those who had spent time in the North, said that they preferred Naples because it was less racist and more relaxed, despite the precarious economic situation and the hectic nature of everyday life.

Despite the typical media image of the area as a chaotic mass of '*clandestini*', the immigrant use of Piazza Garibaldi is very much a structured space that possesses its own order. The immigrant presence changes with the time of day and year. None of my informants had anything to do with the space at night. During August, the piazza is much emptier. Domestic workers are laid-off by their employees and return home, while many street traders sell on beaches or at inland festas or go to work on the tomato harvest. West Africans and Asians (Chinese and Pakistani) are concentrated on the northern side of the piazza and in the streets of Vasto, while East Europeans tend to stick to the southern side when they visit the area on Thursdays and Sundays[26]. Maghrebis (principally Algerians and Tunisians) are perhaps the most spatially dispersed although they are more present on the northern side[27]. This ethnic-national division is reflected by the clientele of bars. A bar on corner of Piazza Principe Umberto has become a haunt for Maghrebis, the bars along the north side of Piazza Garibaldi are frequented by Africans and immigrant street traders, while the pizzerias and bars on the south side and along Corso Lucci are meeting places for Poles [**map 3.v.**]. The area in front of the station is where East Europeans gather. These are primarily Ukrainians, but

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[26] According to an Italian friend of Petra, domestic workers meet on Thursday afternoons because this was the traditional afternoon off for waiters and house servants in Naples.

[27] Amato noted in 1997: "The Maghrebis are the ones who use the piazza the most: they meet in couples or in groups and discuss animatedly leaning on the steps of shops in the streets on the northern side of the piazza." (F. Amato 1997: 22).

there are also Poles, Moldovans, Romanians as well as a few small groups of Pakistanis and Maghrebis. The market in La Duchesca is a sort of interstice where East Europeans, Maghrebis and West Africans all go to buy clothes and shoes. In the streets to the west and north of this area (Via Maddalena, Via Poerio and Via Carriera Grande) are concentrated most of the Chinese-owned wholesale shops (usually distinguishable by the red lanterns hanging outside) which sell clothes produced in local factories or cheap electrical and household items such as alarm clocks and radios imported from China [**fig. 3.12a.**]. The spatial division of the piazza was discernible during guided visits with immigrant informants. While Diop and Ousmanne remained in Vasto, three outings with Petra kept to the opposite side of the piazza. Madji was the most mobile because of his job as an 'international phone line seller' (see below). Although he was the only one to cross the piazza, he still spent most of the time on the northern side in the company of other Pakistanis and West Africans.

Just as the media often employs an elastic definition of Piazza Garibaldi which extends as far as the industrial zone of Gianturco (one mile to the east) when crimes are involved[28], so immigrants possess multiple perceptions of 'Piazza Garibaldi'. For West Africans, for example, 'Piazza Garibaldi' encompasses the streets of Vasto where their economy and meeting places are situated. For many groups the piazza is considered the centre of Naples, which reiterates the polycentric aspect of the city. For Poles and Ukrainians who work in private houses, it is their main contact with the city centre. Young Polish domestic workers living in Vomero referred to the piazza as "*il centro storico*" (interview 12/3/99). This was the only part of the city centre which they would regularly visit in order to send parcels home or catch the coach to Poland. For them it represented the quintessential Neapolitan space and claimed to be put off by the chaos and the incomprehensible dialect (which was not associated with middle-class Vomero). The underground and suburban trains on a Sunday morning are crowded with East European women as they travel in from other parts of the city and surrounding towns and villages. As a transport hub it becomes the natural social space for national groups dispersed over a wide geographical area. A young Polish woman met in the piazza admitted:

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[28] In April 1999, a Japanese tourist was murdered and robbed by two young Poles outside the deserted Gianturco metro station after he had boarded the wrong train in the central station.

"I don't know why we always come to this piazza because in fact it's ugly..But everybody meets here, I do as well even though I might only stay a short while. Often in the afternoon I go for trips to Sorrento, Amalfi..."

The Poles, who have been in Naples longer, tend to meet in designated bars and pizzerias on the southern side rather than in front of the station which is considered the domain of the more recent arrivals. Those met under the *proboscide* in front of the station were all Ukrainians. One young Ukrainian male who had come over after his mother found employment as a domestic worker, claimed that he worked all week but came every Sunday if only for half an hour. "I don't know many people in the piazza but it's a relaxing sort of place."

Piazza Garibaldi is also a multifunctional space. As Landuzzi argues, immigrants imprint themselves on the Italian city through their different uses of time and space (Landuzzi 1999: 83). As well as a recreational space of meetings (the women whom Carlo Franco described as a threat are usually armed with little more than 'rounds' of photographs of relatives), the piazza is a link with countries of origin. Polish and Moroccan coach lines and travel agencies operate in and around the piazza (although in 2001 most coaches were moved to the western district of Bagnoli after work began on the new underground line). Until the beginning of 2000, an unofficial postal service with the Ukraine and Poland was run on Sunday mornings by an assortment of vans parked in the centre of the piazza [**fig. 3.13.**]. Despite accusations in the local media that this was a cover for the Russian and Albanian mafia, all those asked said that they often used the service. A middle-aged Polish male explained that it was quicker and cheaper. Parcels and money would arrive two days later on the doorstep in Poland. The man had never experienced any problems; he knew the driver and therefore trusted him. The situation would change at Christmas and Easter when demand increased and new drivers turned up out of the blue offering an extra service. According to him, these were the types to be avoided. Following their removal at the start of 2000, the vans switched to an area in front of Campi Flegrei, Naples' second railway station on the west side of the city, but shortly afterwards reappeared, albeit in fewer numbers, behind Hotel Terminus on the south-east corner of Piazza Garibaldi.

Traditional functions of the piazza have been 'reappropriated'. In terms of transport, Moroccan and Chinese hawkers use the piazza as an interchange as they move across the province, while the regional bus to Villa Literno and the tomato fields which departs

from the centre of the piazza is typically full of West Africans. The station area is also a residential space due to the cheaper rents and the presence of 'communities' which have evolved over two decades. Many of the informants lived around Piazza Garibaldi. Ousmanne from Guinea used to live in Via Torino near the CGIL headquarters but had recently moved in with three Senegalese friends in an appartment on Corso Novara. Numerous Poles, on the other hand, live on the other side, around Porta Nolana. Petra rented her flat from a Neapolitan man whom she had befriended in 1996 under the *proboscide*. Other immigrants who had more stable forms of income or who lived with Neapolitans had moved out of the area. Many of the hotels have an 'ethnic' base. For instance, hotels Mignon and Dora are both predominantly patronized by Senegalese (Abdoul, the shop assistant, stayed in latter for 45 days when he first arrived in Naples) while Hotel Charlie in Via Milano is the preferred base for Algerian traders when they come to the area to buy goods. Abdoul explains:

> "It's the cheapest area in the city centre because when an immigrant comes down to Naples, he finds at the station a hotel where he can pay 15 to 20,000 lire a night. Instead, when he goes into the city he won't find that price. So perhaps this is one of the reasons why there are more immigrants around the station."

The station area is also significant for religious purposes. Since 1998, a Polish mass has been celebrated every Sunday afternoon in a church on nearby Piazza Nolana, although most spoken to claim that they still go to mass in Mergellina on the other side of the city centre. Two of the city's three mosques are situated close to Piazza Garibaldi: one in Corso Lucci, the other to the north of Piazza Mercato (the other is situated in via Depretis at the other end of the Rettifilo).

Piazza Garibaldi's principal function is as an economic space. Even for the East Europeans, the piazza is a place where domestic jobs are advertised, bought and sold[29]. Until the spring of 2000, the pavements on the northern edge of the piazza were brimming with street traders. Although not strictly adhered to, there is a general 'ethnic' division of work: Pakistanis sell cheap *bijouterie* (either bought from Vasto, the traditional centre of jewellery wholesalers in Naples, or imported directly from Pakistan. as in the case of one individual who had acquired his permit to stay), Chinese sell electronic gadgetry or clothing items, a number of Maghrebis sell casettes of Arabic

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[29] The area around Milan's central railway station serves a similar function for East European domestic workers ("Domestics for sale at the Central Station" *L'Unità* 28/3/01).

music (Amato 1992 and 1997), while West Africans 'specialize' in counterfeit goods such as caps, belts and CDs produced by Neapolitans, as Abdoul points out:

"Generally immigrants only sell cheap stuff..The Senegalese mainly sell bootleg compact discs, like this one here [laughs as he points to nephew]. It's their role! When it comes to CDs, the Senegalese are the majority!" (interview)

As well as the centre of 'ethnic businesses' such as African restaurants, grocery stores, halal butchers and hairdressers, Vasto is the heart of a wholesale economy which has developed around immigrants. Amato for instance noted a difference between 'integrated' street traders in Via Firenze and the more precarious sellers on the Rettifilo (Amato 1992: 93). This area attracts buyers from the whole of the south of Italy (Senegalese street traders interviewed by Scidà in Catania referred to their trips to Naples to purchase wares (1993: 164)) and further afield places such as Marseilles or Algiers (Coppola and Cattedra 1998). Many '*ingrossisti*' have employed immigrant assistants in order to maximise sales, as Abdoul explains:

"To make a shop work of course you need either a Senegalese or a Moroccan; at least someone who speaks different languages!..There's another fact too: when a Senegalese sees somebody from their country in the shop, he enters and at least tries to buy something. For this reason they prefer Senegalese: it's a way of attracting people."

Some immigrants have opened their own shops such as two Senegalese-run stores in Via Torino specializing in African and Asian crafts, and those Chinese who have been longest in Naples have their businesses in this area. From the end of the 1990s there had been a downturn in trade, partly due to increased police controls deterring immigrants away and partly because of Rome establishing itself as a new commercial centre, especially in the wake of an influx of Chinese wholesalers. The Neapolitan colleague of Abdoul, who had worked in the same shop for eight years, noticed a marked drop in business:

"There was much more work 8 years ago. Now it's not even 50% like what it was before. Business has decreased greatly. The piazza has lost its wholesale role. Most go to Rome which has become the centre as far as the supply of merchandise is concerned..People still come from Sardinia and all parts of Italy to buy here. But they first go to Rome and then, if at all, come down here." (interview)

Abdoul regarded the Chinese as the principle competitors in the wholesale economy. The bulk of the goods which he sells are imported from China but the same items are now sold at cheaper prices in the recently opened Chinese stores in the vicinity.

The piazza is also the setting for ingenious entrepreneurial ventures. For instance, Madji, who was still awaiting regularization, would earn about 100,000 lire (just over £30) by buying up an international phone line on his mobile phone for a day which he would then proceed to sell to immigrants at 1,000 lire a minute. Of all the immigrants met, he knew the most nationalities (North and West Africans, Pakistanis, Poles) and during the course of the four hours we spent together in the piazza he was repeatedly asked by passers-by if he had a "line" (to which he would reply "no, perhaps tomorrow"). Elsewhere, a Pole sets up a portable newspaper and magazine stand (in a suitcase) under the *proboscide* on a Sunday, stocking up on weekly visits to Poland

Nearly all those workers who have been in Naples for a few years stress the important contribution that immigrants have made to the local economy. A Senegalese met in Via Bologna exclaimed: "Ten years ago there was nothing in Vasto..without us the area would die, and they know it." Diop similarly states:

"If you go to speak with the shopkeepers in Lavinaio, they'll tell you that they're happy if the immigrants put up their stalls because they draw in people. Others come to buy."

A middle-aged Polish male who used to work as a domestic but now worked intermittently as a decorator receiving 800,000 lire a month (£265, which is the average wage for East European domestic workers) extended this claim to a more macro-level:

"Those who pick tomatoes are Moroccans, Tunisians, Poles, Ukrainians [no reference is made to West Africans]..without us there'd be no tomatoes. And who clean the homes of Italians? Immigrants."

Petra argued that the market in La Duchesca depended on Polish and other immigrant clients:

"They live off our money. Many Poles come here because it is cheap and they buy stuff which many Italians would never buy."

The owner of a cantina where Poles meet on Sundays conceded that immigrants were his main customers and claimed that he did not discriminate: "3,000 lire a carafe of wine for foreigners, Poles and the lady who lives upstairs."

There is also a noticeable degree of interaction with Neapolitans and an appropriation of local routines. Diop who had worked for four years in the Italian warehouses on the north side of Piazza Garibaldi appeared to know everybody in Vasto. The level of contact is linked to the length of time spent in the area. Both Madji and Ousmanne, who had been in Naples for two and five years respectively, did not know any locals in the piazza although they were acquainted with the various immigrant circuits. In the case of East European women, on the other hand, the amount of time spent in the city and legal status were not criteria for contact with locals. Their meetings on the station forecourt attract an entourage of flirtatious middle-aged Neapolitan men (as well as North Africans). Various types of relationships are formed. Petra declared she was "lucky" to have befriended the "right" group, but claimed that not all women had the same fortune. One man, who became a close friend, rented her a flat, another had married a Polish woman who now lived together in Forcella, while a third regularly took Ukrainian and Polish women on afternoon trips to the Amalfi coast. For these men, who described themselves as "former playboys", Piazza Garibaldi had always been a place of foreign liasons: before the East Europeans, the principal targets had been German, Scandinavian and American visitors; and, indeed, one was once married to a Dane and another to an Australian.

Many immigrants have picked up Neapolitan habits and expressions, including those who speak little Italian. For instance, Madji greeted other immigrants and clients with the dialect salute "*ué guaglio!*", while all those who invited me for coffee left 100 lire tips on the bar counter. Piazza Garibaldi has also been appropriated by immigrants as their principal space of protest. Like the *disoccupati organizzati* and other social groups, demonstrations for legal rights start or are carried out by the Garibaldi monument [**fig. 3.14.**][30]. Even though these protests are not explicitly directed at contesting dominant

[30] Although many of the early protests were coordinated by Neapolitan groups such as the *centri sociali* and *3 Febbraio*, some demonstrations are now independently organized. Groups involved in protests include the West Africans, Pakistanis and to a lesser degree the North Africans. On no occasion in the last five years have East Europeans or Chinese been involved.

media representations of immigrants in Piazza Garibaldi, they are significant for opening up oppositional voices in political debates on immigration.

The 'poly-national' presence in the piazza is simultaneously marked by interconnectedness, juxtapositions and distance. Until recently, street traders of different nationalities shared the same strip of pavement. On one observed occasion, a Neapolitan *contrabbandiere* hid cigarettes in a steel box which a Chinese hawker used as a seat, who in turn leant over to borrow a feather duster from a neighbouring Senegalese without uttering a word. In the meantime, the Senegalese asked Madji, the Pakistani who was in conversation with myself, if he had a phone line. In contrast, there is little contact between groups on the two opposite sides of the piazza (although more Poles venture north to visit the bars and shops[31] than their West African counterparts whose day-to-day existence is centred on Vasto). Nobody actually remarked on this divide, although one of the Petra's Neapolitan friends warned me to be careful before crossing the piazza to the northern side. Some informants referred to frictions between different groups. Over half the Poles met complained that Ukrainians were cutting the prices in the domestic sector[32]. The middle-aged man met in the cantina claimed that Poles once had a good reputation as hard workers but this had changed since the Ukrainians arrived. His female friend stated that Ukrainian women were immediately recognizable because they all had gold teeth (two of the three Ukrainian women I met indeed had gold dentures[33]). When asked, all Poles claimed to have no close contact with their national neighbours, although Petra had met a number of Ukrainians through her Neapolitan friends. She herself was enthusiatic about her new acquaintances met on the training course for immigrants. During a visit to the market in the Duchesca, we met one of her Somalian colleagues. She admitted that she was more open than her compatriots but that, aside from general prejudices and stereotypes, there was no real tension. Indeed, the male Pole who defended immigrant workers also included Ukrainians in his list.

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[31] Polish couples were sighted eating in the Tunisian restaurant in Via Torino on two occasions. Many East European women would stop to look at street traders stalls on the pavement of the north side.
[32] According to Fabio Amato, similar complaints were made by the Cape Verdeans and Sri Lankans when the Poles first arrived in the early 1990s (interview 14/4/00).
[33] All the Ukrainian women spoken to had been in the country for no longer than a year and subsequently spoke little Italian, and so a response to Polish accusations was not possible.

The piazza is a site of fears and desires. For all the street traders the principal wish was to work in peace. A friend of Diop believed that while Vasto may look scruffy because of the packages and stalls lining the pavements, this was an accepted feature of the life in the area. Abdoul claimed to be attached to the area but like most of the informants had nothing to do with it at night:

"I think it's a really nice area: a place where you can meet all nationalities. Let's say, a 'melting pot'. This is the great thing about the station. But as for security, that's another issue. I don`t like it at all. When I close up at the end of the day I go away. I don't set foot here at night. I never pass by..Those who frequent the station after midnight only come for sex and drugs. All the shops are closed. There are no services…"

He later added that police controls had to concentrate on the criminal element:

"I don't say that there shouldn't be any controls. But these should concentrate on those who don't work, those who sell drugs, those who become little delinquents. Because, look, Neapolitans don't come here because of the dealers and delinquents. The station area is really dangerous."

All of the informants who touched on the subject were indignant about being labelled criminals. The real culprits were Neapolitans (or Algerians and Tunisians, according to some of the Senegalese and Pakistanis). During the day, for those who regularly frequented it, the piazza was considered "an easygoing place". There were certain areas where one needed to be more vigilant. Petra told me to keep a watch on my bag as we wandered round the market. Madji also took me to the Duchesca to show me an alleyway where Neapolitans and North Africans sold stolen goods. He recounted the story of a fellow Pakistani who would come to Piazza Garibaldi when he needed the phone service but who refused to meet Madji on the northern side because he had been pickpocketed on more than one occasion. Before the crackdown took place, many of the West African and Pakistani street traders were wary about the police and complained about controls. Ousmanne preferred to sell at the weekend along the seafront away from the potential danger of Piazza Garibaldi (although this area was also subject to police raids in the Spring of 2000). During the week he instead worked as a porter for the shops and warehouses in Vasto. Madji claimed that expelling the street traders would only force more immigrants to revert to crime. Senegalese shop assistants in Via Bologna complained that police controls damaged the trade and the general economy of the area. This was repeated by a Neapolitan shop assistant interviewed in Via Torino who also raised doubts about the plan for the street market in Via Bologna. How could

ambulanti sell in the same street as the shops from where they buy their wares at cheaper prices? Abdoul, his Senegalese colleague, remembered the G7 as a moment when immigrants had to lie low:

"Throughout this month nobody set their stall up and nobody worked. It was real bad luck for all immigrants living in Naples. Those who had a bit of money saved got by. Others left and travelled to other cities."

The extraordinary financial and security measures taken to militarize the city during the G7 summit could never be maintained in ordinary circumstances. Like Piazza Plebiscito, controls are not always very efficient. A common theme among both immigrant informants and residents interviewed in the local press is that the police know what is happening (a police station is actually located on the west side of the piazza) but they do not intervene. Controls in the piazza have always been characterized by what Salvatore Pallida terms the "rules of disorder":

"Police action is limited to ensuring that behaviour and activities respect the "rules of disorder"; that they do not provoke too many hostile reactions among the public or the excessive expansion of illegality." (Pallida 1999: 90).

Nevertheless, in the last five years, immigrants have increasingly been on the receiving end of law and order initiatives directly targetted at them *in Piazza Garibaldi*. For the few informants present in Naples during the G7, Piazza Garibaldi during early 2000 was beginning to reassume the appearance of the '*città blindata*'. The conflicts over Piazza Garibaldi were less spectacular than the night patrols and torch processions organized by resident committees in northern cities (Foot 2000; Petrillo 2000). However the focus on immigration as a cause of the area's decline was particularly conspicuous in a city which had traditionally tolerated a pervasive presence of illegal, informal and irregular activities.

Following its new design in the late 1950s, Piazza Garibaldi came to be considered an intersection of multiple flows of people and traffic whose immense form did not easily fit the traditional concept of 'piazza' as an intimate place of face-to-face encounter. Under the Bassolino administration, the ambivalent vision of the space as a '*biglietto da visita*' was resurrected. The restoration of public space has been part of the general rhetoric of urban regeneration throughout Western cities (McNeill 1999). This has often translated into devising consumer-oriented, orderly, safe places, rather than spaces of

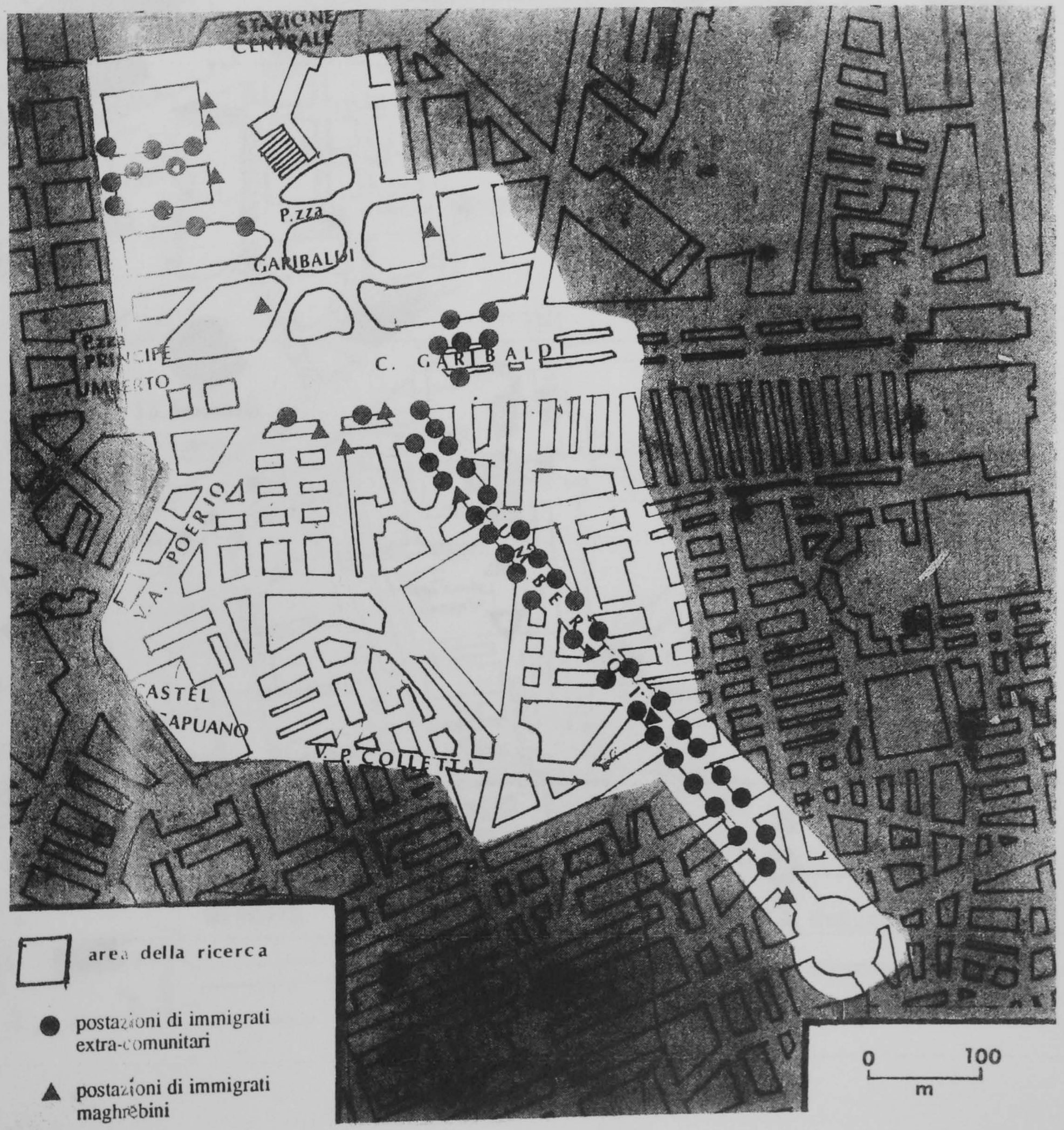
free interaction (Amin 2000). The conceptualization of public space in the case of Piazza Garibaldi involved a restricted notion of 'public' and 'citizenship' which extended as far as the tourist but not to immigrants. Therefore, while the assembly of strangers might be regarded an integral, defining element of piazzas, in Piazza Garibaldi this became a cause for public alarm. The arrival of immigrants and their appropriation of Piazza Garibaldi had reconfirmed the 'fluid', open-ended nature of the station area. But after the G7, their presence increasingly became a source of conflict as attempts were made to 'ground' the piazza in a new dominant narrative about Naples as a safe, welcoming city.

This detailed description of Piazza Garibaldi underlines the complex nature of 'immigrant space'. The piazza is characterized by a range of boundaries and itineraries, such as the discernible division between the north and south sides, which are constituted by a variety of divergent relationships with the station area. While it is a place of social interaction, it is not always a space of communication between different groups. Consensual images of Piazza Garibaldi as a dangerous, dirty or ugly place are internalized and reinterpreted. For instance, Abdoul intertwines his disdain for criminal practices with a positive image of the piazza as a 'melting pot'. Although immigrants do not share a common definition of the piazza, the space nevertheless accomodates a myriad of recreational and economic activities. Through its various functions, the station area is also 'symbolized' (Signorelli 1996). For instance, for many East European domestic workers, Piazza Garibaldi represents both the centre of Naples and the hub of social life, and at the same time a link with their countries of origin, as a result of the presence of coach and postal services and improvised newspaper stands. It is this unmediated diversity of the piazza which is considered by many commentators to be the central virtue of 'democratic' public space (Walzer 1986; Mitchell 1995; Amin 2000). Indeed, in many ways, it is as a result of the immigrants' multiple appropriations of the space that the vast, traffic-congested '*piazzale*' is rendered a 'piazza'. This is not simply the 'gateway' to the *centro storico* but an opening to the diverse and alternative worlds which constitute the increasingly heterogeneous urban experience of Naples.

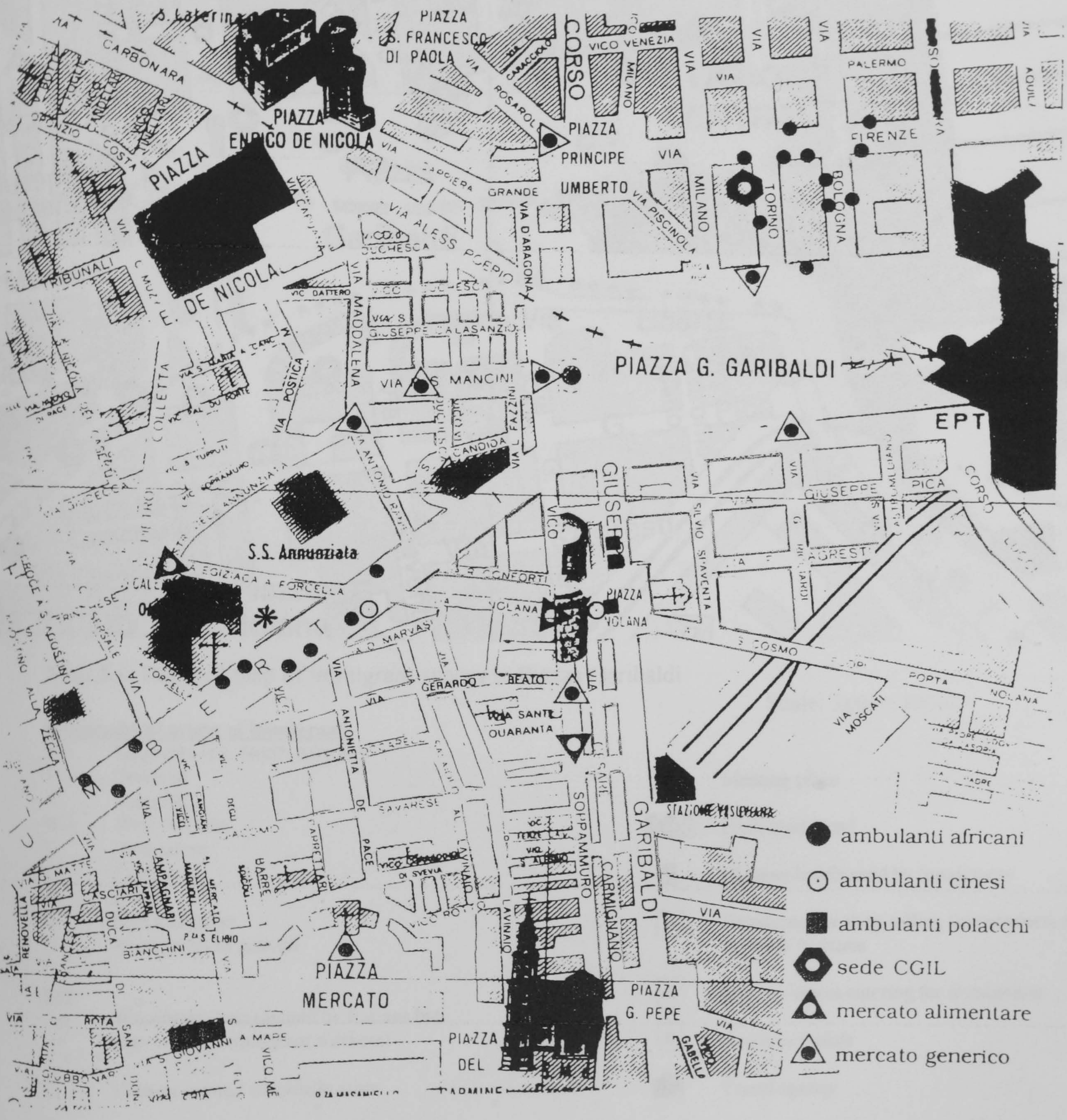
However, there are two 'public spaces' of Piazza Garibaldi: that of the physical piazza and that of the discursive realm of public debates. Immigrants' definitions of the piazza are excluded from this latter sphere, despite the fact that they are among its principal

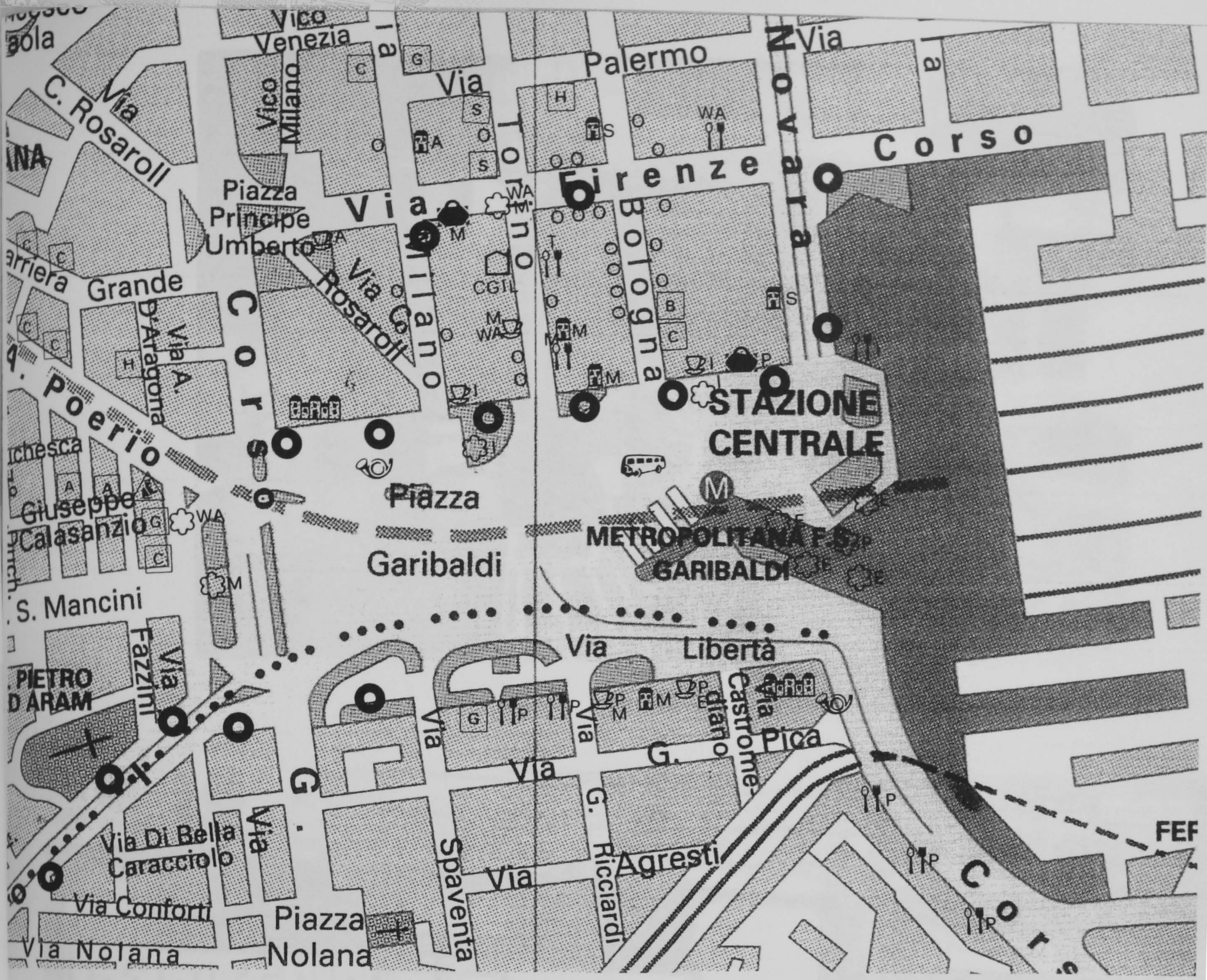
users. The complexities of the piazza are simplified in official debates which are imbued with stereotypes linking immigrants with the area's problems and are framed in terms of 'us' (Neapolitans and tourists) versus 'them' (immigrants and other undesirable users). As "unknown subjects" (Landuzzi 1996b) and, by legal and political definition, non-citizens, immigrants are frequently represented as an 'illegitimate' public. They are not conceived as private citizens who *voluntarily* associate in public (which, as Mitchell argues (1995: 118) is the ideological foundation of citizenship in modern democracies), but are instead usually described as an incoherent mass of foreigners who physically take over the space. Activities normally connected with the private space of the home but which are carried out publicly in the piazza – such as sleeping, drinking alcohol, eating dinner or going to the toilet – are often highlighted by journalists to accentuate the sense of disorder and to further delegitimate the immigrant presence.

While immigrants have continued, regardless, to reappropriate and renegotiate urban space in Naples, they have occasionally made themselves publicly heard through collective action and protest. It is in the material realm of public space that other voices "may arise and contest issues of citizenship and democracy" (Mitchell 1995: 117). It is significant that political struggles should take place, or at least begin, in Piazza Garibaldi. Although action is primarily concerned with political and legal issues, such as demanding the release of blocked documents, these moments offer the chance to assert their right to the city and to publicly project alternative definitions of immigration.



3.iii. Fabio Amato's first map of immigrant street traders (1992)


PIAZZA ENRICO DE NICOLA
PIAZZA G. GARIBALDI
PIAZZA MERCATO
PIAZZA PRINCIPE UMBERTO
PIAZZA G. PEPE
PIAZZA DEL
PIAZZA VOLANA
CORSO GARIBALDI
CARBONARA
TRIBUNALI
COLLETTA
VIA MADDALENA
VIA ANTONIETTA DE PACE
VIA SOPPAMMURO
VIA CARMIGNANO
VIA LAVINAIO
VIA ALESS. POERIO
VIA D'ARAGONA
VIA MILANO
VIA TORINO
VIA BOLOGNA
VIA FIRENZE
VIA PALERMO
VIA GIUSEPPE PICA
VIA S. COSMO PORTA NOLANA
VIA MOSCATI
VIA GIUSEPPE SALASANZIO
VIA S. MANCINI
VIA CANDIDA
VIA L. FAZZINI
VIA ROSAROLO
VIA CAPUANA
VIA POSTICA
VIA SILVIO SPAVENTA
VIA PISCINOLA
VICO VENEZIA
VICO DUCHESCA
VICO DATTERO
VICO GERARDO BEATO
VICO SANTA QUARANTA
VICO GABELLA
VICO SCIARRETTA
VICO DI SVEVIA
VICO BARBE
VICO CAMPAGNARI
VICO MERCATO
VICO S. GIOVANNI A MARE
VICO S. TUTTI I SANTI
VICO S. ANNUNZIATA
VICO CONFORTI
VICO SCIARRETTA
VICO BIANCHINI
VICO DUCA
VICO RENOVELLA
VICO ADDOLORATA
VICO ZECCA
VICO CROCE A S. AGOSTINO
VICO CROCE A FORCELLA
VICO EGIZIACA A FORCELLA
VICO S. AGOSTINO ALLA ZECCA
VICO S. NICOLA ALLA DOGANA
VICO S. MARIA A CAPUANA
VICO S. MARIA DEL POPOLO
VICO S. ANTONIO ABATE
VICO S. PIETRO A MAIELLA
VICO S. MARIA DEL PURGATORIO
VICO S. MARIA DEL PURGATORIO AD ARCO
VICO S. MARIA DEL PURGATORIO AI MONTI
VICO S. MARIA DEL PURGATORIO AL PENDINO
VICO S. MARIA DEL PURGATORIO AL PENDINO
VICO S. MARIA DEL PURGATORIO AL PENDINO



Map 3.v. Detailed map of immigrant spaces in Piazza Garibaldi

Scale: 3cm = 100m

Geographical origin of immigrant

M	Maghrebi (i.e. North African)
T	Tunisian
A	Algerian
WA	West African
S	Senegalese
C	Chinese
P	Polish
E	East European
I	Immigrants in general

Key

- O — Wholesale store (owned by Italians but may employ immigrant workers)
- [C] — Chinese-owned wholesale store
- [A] — Algerian-owned wholesale store
- [S] — Senegalese-owned wholesale store
- Street traders (pitches)
- Bar
- Restaurant (initial above sign indicates that it is owned by immigrants, to the right indicates that it is frequented by immigrants)
- Meeting place
- High-class hotel
- Cheaper hotels used by immigrants
- [H] — Hairdresser or shop selling hair products run by West Africans
- [G] — Grocery stores catering for immigrants
- [B] — Butchers (halal)
- Travel agency
- East European postal service
- Departure point for coaches to Eastern Europe and Morocco
- Police station

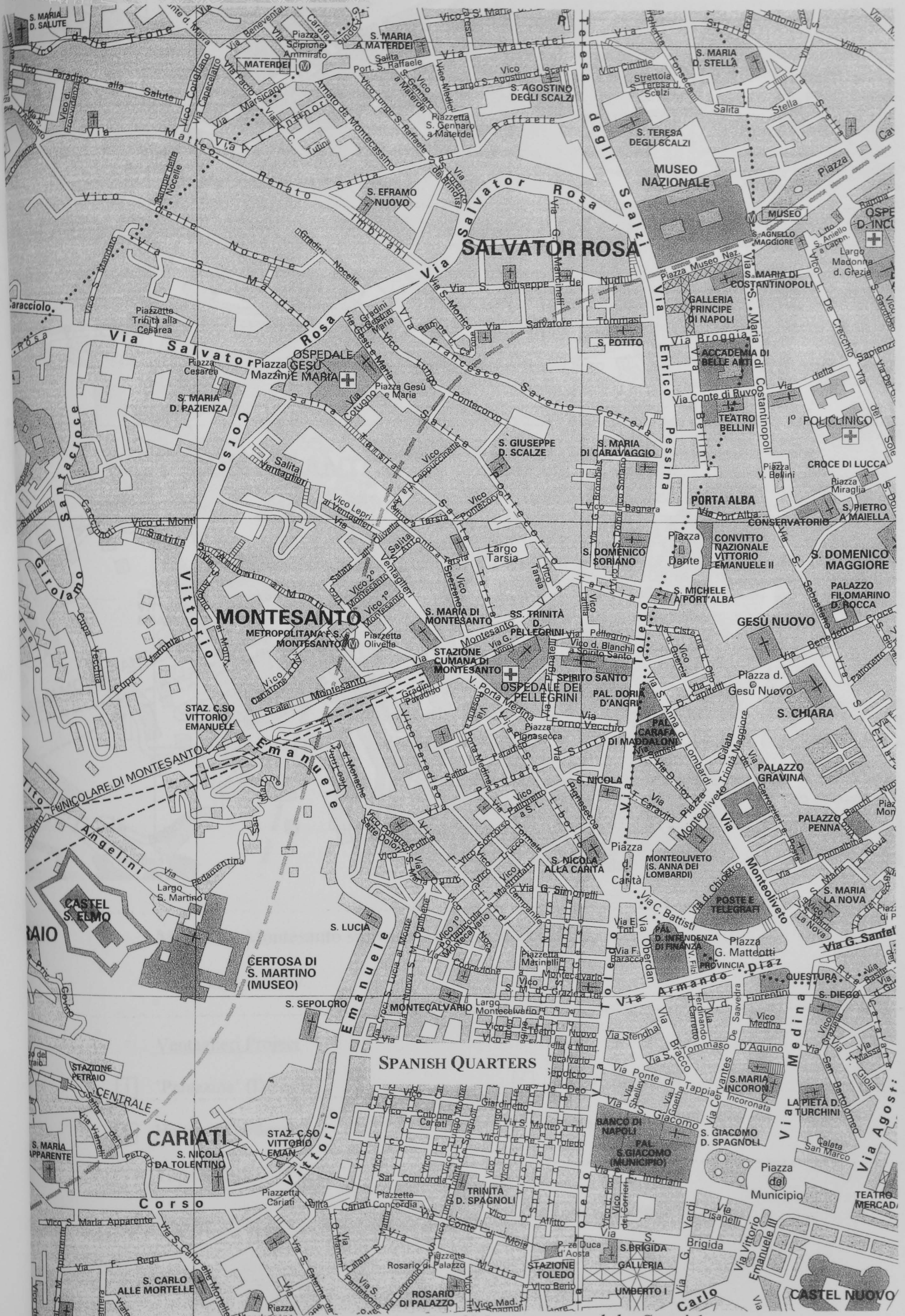
3.12a. and 3.12b. Immigrants in station area. 3.12a.: Via Poerio, November 1999. 3.12b.: *Banane* 'multiethnic' supermarket, Piazza Garibaldi, November 1999

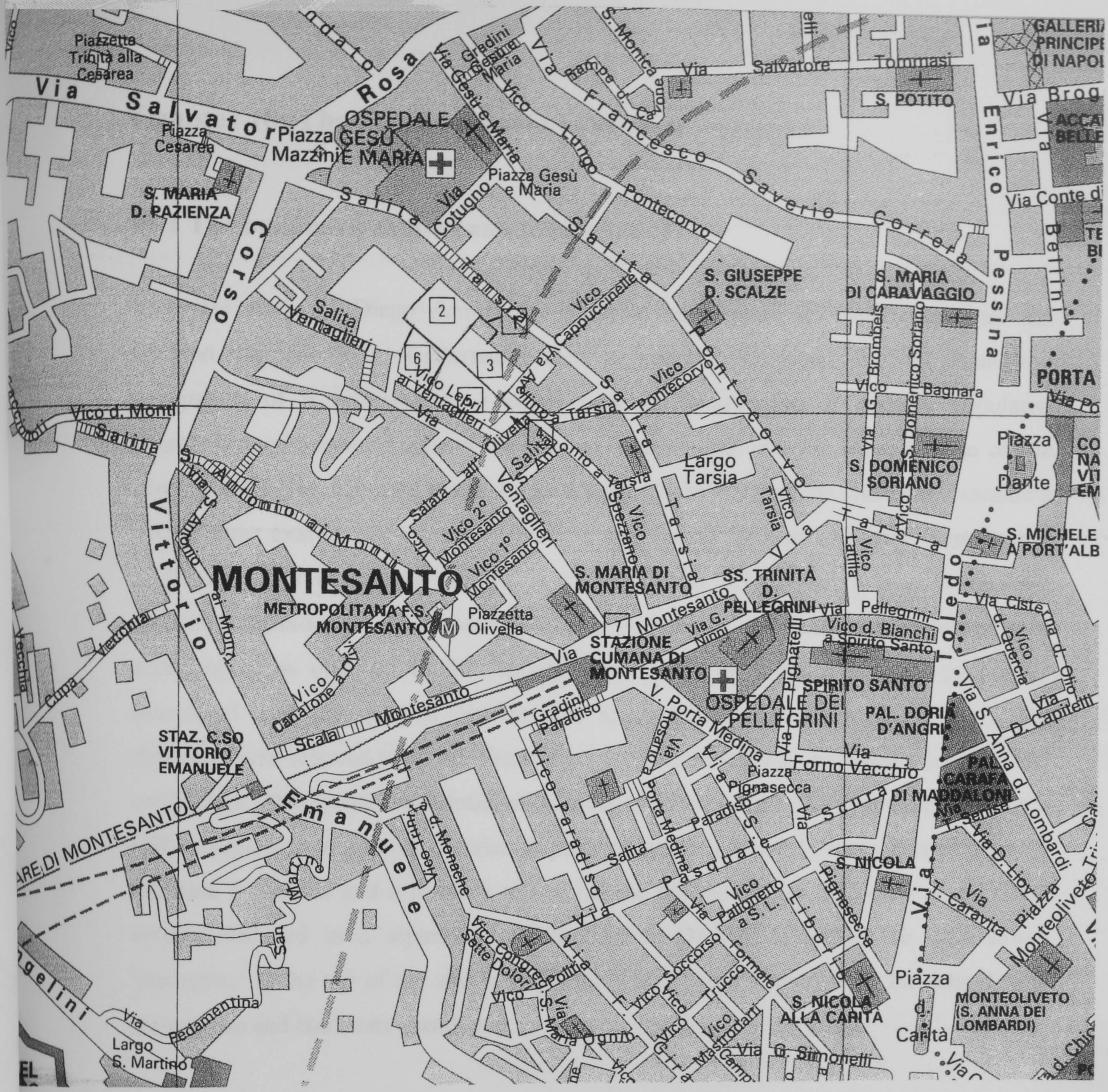
3.13. Postal service in Piazza Garibaldi, September 1999

3.14. Immigrants on Garibaldi monument prior to a march to the *questura*, November 1999

PART 4: AN ALTERNATIVE IDEA OF PUBLIC SPACE: THE *CENTRO SOCIALE* AT MONTESANTO 1995-2000

4.1. View of DAMM and Parco Ventaglieri from Corso Vittorio Emanuele (1999)


SALVATOR ROSA
MONTESANTO
SPANISH QUARTERS
CARIATI
Via Salvator Rosa
Corso Vittorio Emanuele
Via Toledo
Via Medina
Via Armando Diaz
Via Agostino Depretis
Via Guglielmo Sanfelice
Via Monteoliveto
Via Pessina
Via Enrico Pessina
Via Francesco Saverio Correra
Via Girolamo Santacroce
Via Angelini
Via Cesario Console
Via Nuova Marina
Via Cristoforo Colombo
Via Ferdinando Acton
Via Partenope
Via Caracciolo
Via Vittorio Emanuele III
Via Giuseppe Verdi
Via Cesare Battisti
Via Giuseppe Garibaldi
Via Giuseppe Mazzini
Via Giuseppe Monaldi
Via Giuseppe Piazzi
Via Giuseppe Sanfelice
Via Giuseppe Simonelli
Via Giuseppe Toniolo
Via Giuseppe Verdi
Via Giuseppe Mancinelli


Via Salvator Rosa
Piazzetta Trinità alla Cesarea
Piazza Cesarea
OSPEDALE GESÙ E MARIA
Piazza Mazzini
S. MARIA D. PAZIENZA
Corso Vittorio Emanuele
Via Gesù e Maria
Gradini Gesù e Maria
Vico Lungo Salita Pontecorvo
Piazza Gesù e Maria
Via Cotugno
Salita Ventaglieri
Vico Cappuccinelle
Via Francesco Saverio Correra
Via Enrico Pessina
S. GIUSEPPE D. SCALZE
S. MARIA DI CARAVAGGIO
S. DOMENICO SORIANO
Piazza Dante
PORTA
Largo Tarsia
Vico Tarsia
Via Tarsia
S. MICHELE A PORT'ALB
MONTESANTO
METROPOLITANA F.S. MONTESANTO
Piazzetta Olivella
S. MARIA DI MONTESANTO
SS. TRINITÀ D. PELLEGRINI
STAZIONE CUMANA DI MONTESANTO
Via Montesanto
Scala Montesanto
Vico Canalone a Via
Gradini Paradiso
OSPEDALE DEI PELLEGRINI
SPIRITO SANTO
PAL. DORIA D'ANGRI
PAL. CARAFA DI MADDALONI
Via Forno Vecchio
Piazza Pignasecca
Via Porta Medina
Via Paradiso
S. NICOLA ALLA CARITÀ
MONTEOLIVETO (S. ANNA DEI LOMBARDI)
Piazza Carità
Via Toledo
Via Pignatelli
Via Pellegrini
Via Cisterna d. Olio
Via S. Anna d. Lombardi
Via Caravita
Via Monteoliveto
Via Ventaglieri
Vico Ventaglieri
Salita Ventaglieri
Vico Leprì
Via Olivella
Salita Tarsia
Vico Pontecorvo
Vico d. Monti
Salita Monti
Via S. Antonio ai Monti
Vico 2° Montesanto
Vico 1° Montesanto
Salita Montesanto
Vico Spezzano
Vico Tarsia
Vico Lattilla
Via Pellegrini
Vico d. Bianchi a Spirito Santo
Via Cisterna d. Olio
Vico d. Quercia
Via D. Capitelli
Via Porta Medina
Via Paradiso
Via Pignasecca
Via Formale
Via Trucco
Via Soccorso
Via Pontile
Via Sette Dolori
Via Pattonetto a S. L.
Via Mastrodati
Via G. Simonelli
Via Carità
Via Monteoliveto
Via D. Lioy
Via Sedile di Porta
Via Vecchia
Via Cupa
Via Montesanto
Via Vicaria Vecchia
Via Redamentina
Largo S. Martino
Via Angelini
Via Emanuele
Via Marina
Via d. Monache
Via Lucia
Via Paradiso
Via Porta Medina
Via Pignasecca
Via Forno Vecchio
Via Caravita

Chapter 10: The *Vecchi Quartieri Popolari*

10.1 The built environment and urban policy

The case study of Diego Armando Maradona Montesanto (DAMM) examines the creation and promotion of alternative ideas of public space which evolved around the occupation of a building in a small park in Montesanto, a densely populated neighbourhood located between the foot of Vomero hill and the western edge of the *centro antico* [**fig. 4.1. and maps 4.i. and 4.ii.**]. DAMM offers the chance to examine a very distinct example of a *centro sociale*, a widespread form of collective organization in Italian cities during the 1990s, in the particular urban setting of a Neapolitan *quartiere popolare*. In other words, it deals with a case of conscious contestation of urban space as opposed to the 'spontaneous' forms of urban resistance commonly associated with this part of Naples. The space in question forms part of a larger structure, here referred to as the Ventaglieri Project, which was designed after the 1980 earthquake. This former residential area, wedged between two alleyways separated by a tuff escarpment, consists of a series of terraced gardens located twenty metres above a concrete esplanade and a primary school. These two levels are linked by an escalator system enclosed in a separate building. Before DAMM occupied the three-storey '*palazzina*' at the top of the site in 1995, the whole project, apart from the school, was incomplete and had been abandoned.

Before analysing the evolution of the Ventaglieri project, it is necessary to examine the position of the *vecchi quartieri popolari* and their inhabitants in urban debates and representations of the *centro storico* during the late twentieth century. Throughout the city's modern history, the *quartieri* have held a very ambivalent postion within urban narratives of Naples. While the bustling *vicoli* (alleyways) traditionally constituted metonyms of the city, for most of the twentieth century such scenes were under constant threat of demolition. Local authorities and planners responsible for the city's modernization were torn between "the desire to eradicate the casbah of its poor quarters and the paralysing fascination with a bimillenial urban system" (Macry 1994: 158). Similarly, the dwellers of these central neighbourhoods, the so-called '*popolo*', have either been at the centre or on the fringe of definitions of Neapolitan-ness. They have traditionally embodied both the city's perceived 'backwardness' and its 'vitality', and

have been a constant source of attraction and repulsion for Italian and foreign writers over the centuries (Ramondino and Müller 1992). The reimaging of the *centro storico* during the 1990s raised new dilemmas. Above all, if Naples was to be marketed as a tourist and cultural capital, how should the reputation of its neighbourhoods as "seething dens", as one travel writer in a British broadsheet joyfully described them (Elms 1998), be tackled?

At the end of the nineteenth century, Matilde Serao famously argued that in order to improve the lives of the city's poor citizens, it was not enough to simply 'disembowel' Naples; the whole city would have to be rebuilt (Serao 1994: 11). Yet, the street plan and buildings of the *quartieri* not involved in the *Risanamento* have hardly changed over the last three hundred years[1]. Apart from the Rione Carità, other large-scale programmes of modernization remained on paper. For example, all the city plans in the twentieth century envisaged a trunk road (parallel to the city's central artery Via Roma) which would have demolished parts of the Spanish Quarters and Montesanto. According to the logic of these plans, the network of narrow alleyways blocked the development of the city's infrastructure and hindered economic growth. But besides the reconstruction of bomb-damaged sites after the Second World War, there were few interventions. The frequent collapses of buildings usually resulted in families being rehoused in outlying parts of Naples rather than in structural improvements. As explained in chapter 1, while the fragile social and physical conditions of the *quartieri* were exacerbated by the 1980 earthquake, the reconstruction programme concentrated on building new housing and services in the city's run-down suburbs. The few PSER projects in the *centro storico* (which included the Ventaglieri project) were small-scale experimental schemes which were not intended to have a great social impact. Maurizio Valenzi, the Communist mayor during the immediate post-earthquake era, argued that the improved conditions in the suburbs would enable a 'thinning' of the *centro storico* population which was a necessary precondition for an eventual *risanamento* of the old neighbourhoods (Valenzi 1987: 51).

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[1] Montesanto and the Spanish Quarters remain practically the same as they were three centuries ago. If one compares a present day plan with an eighteenth century map of the area, the only major change is the narrowing of Piazza Montesanto following the construction of the funicular and the Cumana railway station at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Largely as a result of the limited public interventions after the earthquake, the *quartieri popolari* increasingly became a focus of conflict for different view points on the *centro storico*. While environmental and heritage groups pressed for the protection and conservation of the whole of the *centro storico*, various private interest groups proposed ambitious restructuring programmes. These divergent, incompatible positions came to ahead with the '*Regno del Possibile*' ('The Realm of the Possible') project, launched at the end of 1986 by the 'Società Studi Centro Storico', a consortium of building firms, banks, academics and politicians. The detailed project, published in two volumes in June 1988 (Studi Centro Storico Napoli 1988), proposed an extensive transformation of the old neighbourhoods. Buildings categorized as structurally unsafe and of little historical value would have to be replaced or cleared to make way for much needed green areas, schools, leisure facilities, carparks. In addition a new service sector would have to be developed, including the construction of conference centres which, it was claimed, would allow for the economic recovery of the whole of Naples. The project was essentially a blueprint for demolition and promised massive financial returns for an insatiable building industry. Large swathes of the Spanish Quarters, Montesanto and Sanità were to be razed. In the case of the Spanish Quarters it was decided to hold an international competition to decide a new urban layout, but elsewhere there were no indications regarding the style or form of future constructions. In the area of Ventaglieri in Montesanto, whole blocks and streets were to disappear to give way to a car park next to the Montesanto underground station, while the fronts of other buildings were to be pulled down to allow for the widening of alleyways. Significantly, the Ventaglieri project was one of the few sites to be left untouched because it was legally bound to the post-earthquake reconstruction programme.

The *Regno del Possibile's* promoters all insisted that the social composition of the *centro storico* would not be dramatically altered and would be preserved for the city's benefit. Residents would instead be guaranteed the same standard of living enjoyed in more modern parts of the city (Siola 1988: 197). Work on the designated twenty three areas of the *centro storico* would be staggered over a period of fifteen years to allow for the temporary removal of residents who would then be rehoused in modern accomodation in their neighbourhoods of origin. However, promoters declared that the transformation of the *quartieri* also aimed to entice the middle classes back to the *centro storico*, which would help revive the local artisan industry, and prevent the

centre from becoming more of a "ghetto" (Corsi 1989: 4). They argued that this would indeed occur if the local authorities maintained a non-interventionist stance and, with the backing of influential politicians in central government such as the Christian Democrat Cirino Pomicino, urged the administration to adopt the plans. While the *Regno del Possibile* clearly appeared to be incubated in the post-earthquake period (Dal Piaz 1987)[2], it also reflected the growing trend across Italy during the 1980s of businesses attempting to dictate the public planning agenda of cities (Indovina 1994).

Significantly the PCI and unions were not against the proposals in principle and agreed that inaction would be the worst possible outcome (NdR 1989: 31). The PCI was above all vehemently opposed to speculation. Nevertheless, there was suspicion that the consortium hoped to overturn the public planning process. It was stressed that any major programme would have to be administered by the governing institutions with the consultation of residents and concern was raised over the undemocratic idea of shifting populations from their abodes[3]. Besides general disapproval on the left, local intellectuals and heritage groups such as Italia Nostra and Napoli 99, as well as architects and urban campaigners from across Italy, such as Pier Luigi Cervellati who had masterminded the restoration of Bologna's *centro storico* during the 1970s, mobilized to save Naples from the bulldozers. Opponents feared the destruction of a unique urban system, although some appeared more preoccupied about the fate of historic buildings than with the inhabitants (Craveri 1989: 50). Ultimately, however, the over-ambitious *Regno del Possibile* remained a dead letter on paper because the administration refused to switch decisions to central government. This, according to Francesco Barbagallo, was one of the isolated political successes of the 1980s (Barbagallo 1997b: 105). The episode also clearly indicated that any far-reaching restructuring of the *quartieri* orchestrated by outside interests would necessarily involve the dislocation of local residents.

The opposition to the *Regno del Possibile* underlined a growing concern during the late 1980s for the city's historical patrimony and saw a decisive rejection of restructuring projects. In the 1990s, the general consensus of political opinion was to conserve rather

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[2] Barbagallo, who sees the whole affair as representative of the rampant corruption of the 1980s, argues that the assignment of a further 12 billion lire to the reconstruction of earthquake-hit areas in the national budgets of 1987 and 1988 was instrumental to the development of the project (Barbagallo 1997b: 100).

[3] The whole affair provoked a fierce debate at the PCI provincial congress in 1989 which led to the marginalization of two party members involved in the project (Barbagallo 1997b: 103-104).

than demolish the *centro storico's* fragile urban system[4]. Under the Bassolino administration, the *centro storico* was no longer considered the impediment to the city's modernization but the vehicle for urban recovery. The *centro storico's* size and diversity became the city's principal asset. The first Bassolino administration drew up a unique "*piano per il centro storico*" to document the type and period of every structure with the aim of blocking unwarranted adjustments:

> "The objective is to restore buildings and raise them to modern standards and at the same time prevent any poor repair work or inappropriate use which might compromise their distinctive characteristics." (Comune di Napoli 1999: VI).

Planning permission for new building in any form and for whatever reason was firmly rejected. Vezio De Lucia recalls the public outcry after he prevented a school in the Sanità neighbourhood from constructing a greenhouse in its courtyard (De Lucia 1998: 35-36). The construction of new main roads (the *sventramenti*), at the top of the planning agenda for most of the twentieth century, was ditched in favour of controls on traffic entering the centre and the completion of a new underground network.

Conservation of the past however posed a different set of problems. The most pressing question was what to do about the derelict condition of large tracts of the *centro storico*. The 'Urban Programme', the city's first ever scheme to be part-funded by the European Union, has been the most ambitious regenerational project in the *quartieri*. Although limited to a few interventions in the Spanish Quarters and the Sanità, its main objectives have been to offer social and cultural services that were previously absent, financially support local businesses (in particular artisan workshops) and 'integrate' problem areas with rest of the city. Local non-governmental groups such as the *Associazione Quartieri Spagnoli* have been actively involved in the planning process in order to maximise the project's social impact. In the Spanish Quarters for instance, the project has involved the redesign of five small piazzas and the repaving of a few alleyways adjoining Via Roma. An old nursery school is being reconverted into a multipurpose space housing a neighbourhood police station, a job centre for young people and family advice clinic. According to Giovanni Laino, the project "should..set off a process which spreads to the rest of the neighbourhood as has already occurred in other parts of the *centro storico*"

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[4] For example, during the election campaign for mayor in 1993, the two main candidates – Antonio Bassolino and Alessandra Mussolini – both gave assurances that the Spanish Quarters would not be destroyed (*il Mattino* 3/12/93).

(Laino 1999: 52). The choice of the Spanish Quarters and Sanità as the two sites is significant.

"The poor conditions of the *centro storico* have made it difficult to meet the Urban Programme's request of a small area. The Spanish Quarters and the Sanità have been chosen because they constitute two places of particular significance in the city's history." (Comune di Napoli 1997: 5).

The reasons for choosing the two areas therefore coincided with the administration's desire to recuperate and market the city's past. For instance, the restored Palazzo dello Spagnolo in the Sanità will partly house a museum dedicated to the actor Totò. These interventions are targetted as much at new users (such as tourists) as they are at residents. Apart from the Urban Programme, other schemes in the neighbourhoods have planned the renovation and conversion of single buildings or sites for cultural and collective purposes. Many of the more ambitious schemes have remained on paper. One exception is the Ospedale Militare, a former military hospital in the Spanish Quarters whose gardens were opened to the public in 2000. This space has been used to host cultural events, such as open-air cinema and jazz concerts during the summer, which have been primarily directed at city users in general rather than the neighbourhood itself.

Although the whole of the *centro storico* was finally accorded official protection under the Bassolino administration, the *quartieri* were otherwise rarely incorporated into programmes for the area's renewal. In most parts of the neighbourhoods, the signs of regeneration were not visible. They did not feature in the facelift for the G7 summit in 1994. Little concern was displayed for the detrimental effect that the pedestrianization of piazzas and streets would have on adjacent districts. One informant who lived in the Pallonetto complained that since the closure of Piazza Plebiscito, cars have diverted down the narrow backstreets. The drawing up of the "art paths" through the *centro antico* and the area around Piazza Plebiscito excluded the *quartieri* from the official tourist itineraries. While restoration work has been carried out on important *palazzi* in the *centro antico*, many buildings damaged during the earthquake still await the release of state funds for necessary repairs. Mario Pochet, a former PCI district councillor who organized residents' protests in Montesanto after the earthquake asserts:

"If you go up into the [Spanish] Quarters, you'll still find buildings propped up by scaffolding. One of the criticisms directed at this administration is that while it has undoubtably managed to project a different image of Naples at national and international level, this has been a superficial operation. On the inside nothing has substantially changed. The areas remain what they were before." (Mario Pochet, interview, 11/8/99)

10.2 Representations of the neighbourhoods and their inhabitants

Like all urban settings, the central neighbourhoods of Naples elude general, unequivocal classifications (Shields 1996). However, due to the particularities of these districts and their apparent *aporetic* effect on traditional Western urban models of rationality and modernity, the temptation to elicit all-embracing definitions has always been great. Literature therefore refers to the poverty as one of its defining characteristics. As pointed out in chapter two, by the 1970s the subsistence 'slum economy' had been eclipsed by the '*economia sommersa*' (outworking and informal economy). Although from this decade onwards the general standard of living of residents rose (Pardo 1996), levels of unemployment and precarious forms of work also increased dramatically (Mingione and Morlicchio 1993). Daily life is said to be contemporaneously structured by the survival strategy '*l'arte d'arrangiarsi*' which has been described as "re-arranging available elements as props for an unstable urban existence" (Chambers 1996: 56). However, this has tended to be deployed specifically to explain those more visible, idiosyncratic practices (such as the *granita* seller in Piazza Plebiscito) which "evade the controls and behavioural rules imposed by organized work" (De Matteis 1993: 142). The neighbourhoods have also traditionally been regarded as the domains of organized crime. This common association does not, however, consider the ways in which crime and the Camorra are stigmatized by residents themselves (De Matteis 1993; Pardo 1996). Moreover, criminal activities such as the dealing in hard drugs should not be conflated with common, openly practiced, illegal or semi-legal occupations such as the selling of contraband cigarettes "in as far as [the former] guarantee higher levels of income and because there is very little possibility of their being legalized" (Mingione and Morlicchio 1993: 424).

Certain terms have been used by social scientists to comprehend and categorize the 'otherness' of inhabitants; either to account for their socio-economic position ('lumpenproletariat', 'precarious proletariat' and 'under class') or to reflect back on a set of common cultural values, codes and practices such as the label '*popolino*'[5]. Studies have raised conflicting arguments – from the political 'backwardness' of 'slum society' (Allum 1974) or the rejection of morals in favour of cunning and force in the

[5] Italo Pardo uses '*popolino*' as surrogate for the amalgam of '*sottoproletariato*', working-class and petite-bourgeois residents.

negotiations of daily life (Belmonte 1989), to a focus on neglected elements such as entrepreneurialism (Pardo 1996) – but these have nevertheless tended to cast the *quartieri* as a socially uniform space[6].

Recent anthropological research by local scholars has highlighted the complex, composite social world of 'popular Naples'. Both Grilli (1992) and De Matteis (1993) demonstrate that the social and economic life paths of residents and their relationship with the 'community' vary according to the level of family ties, on the one hand, and the extent of informal extra-kin networks on the other. The alleyways are a much more dynamic domain: "they represent a universe where choices can be made and where people can carve out their own space associating or disassociating themselves from others" (ibid.: 160). Furthermore, the social composition of the *centro storico* is more cosmopolitan than is implied by the label '*popolare*'. Firstly, although it is true that the middle-class exodus to the new residential districts during the post-war period radically changed the layered socio-occupational structure of the *centro storico*, this was not a uniform process, and some neighbourhoods such as Montesanto retained a more cross-class composition than others and, indeed, included working-class residents who commuted to outlying factories. Secondly, the heterogeneous mix of the neighbourhoods has increased over the last twenty years. There has been a rise in new middle-class residents who, like the earlier 'pioneers' of the 1970s such as political activists and intellectuals, have been attracted by the cultural and social facilities of the *centro storico*[7]. The increasing popularity of the centre, especially among young people, means that one needs also to take into consideration the rise in outside users of services, such as restaurants and bars, located in the neighbourhood areas. Thirdly, the settlement of many immigrants in the *centro storico* over the last two decades has called into question the notion of a singular urban identity. Some national groups have congregated in specific neighbourhoods: Sri Lankans in the Sanità, Philipinos and Eritreans in the

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[6] Indeed, Pardo's meticulous critique of economically determinist definitions of the '*popolino's*' marginality is premised on a simple but contentious statement which is consigned to a brief footnote at the back of his book: "The centre of Naples can reasonably be regarded as sociologically homogenous" (ibid.: 190 fn.15).

[7] A similar process of middle-class return has occurred in other Italian cities where the *centro storico* had been abandoned after the war; for instance in Genova (Petrillo 2000) and Palermo (Gerbino 2000). One of the residents of the Pallonetto interviewed in Piazza Plebiscito had moved to the neighbourhood from Vomero in 1980: "My parents were communists and they took this demagogic decision to move into a *quartiere popolare*. But you're always richer than the others and so integration is never 100%. It's as if you were always in the territory of others."

Spanish Quarters and Cape Verdeans in Montesanto. One should therefore be very wary of all-encompassing definitions of the neighbourhood populations.

What is of interest here is how the 'indigenous' inhabitants – the 'popular classes' – have been conceived in local left wing political discourse. Studies of the post-war political system in Naples have examined the extent to which inhabitants of the *quartieri*, regardless of their class position, were regarded as fodder for votes; first blatantly by Lauro and, later, more strategically by the Christian Democrats (Allum 1974; Chubb 1982). The Communist Party's relationship with this electorate was directly affected by its moral opposition (and lack of access) to the clientilistic system as well as its exclusion from central state funds. But although it was suspicious of a culturally backward 'mob' (Pardo 1993: 85)[8], the PCI nevertheless saw the neighbourhood poor as a group through which it could build consensus. The party's instrumental role in the cholera crisis of 1973 during which it organized the clean-up of infected areas and immunization programmes, as well as its support for the organized unemployed protests, contributed to its success in local elections in 1975. These two mobilizations were also highly significant because they proved that the non-industrial working class were not inherently individualistic or politically opportunistic. However, this same electorate was also partly responsible for the Valenzi government's eventual downfall in 1983. Judith Chubb (1982) argues that their support was oriented to short-term material goals which were not satisfied. Italo Pardo takes a different angle: the administration's insistence on honest government impressed but ultimately alienated many voters from the *quartieri* through its refusal and inability to offer substantial improvements to their everyday lives. He argues that the disillusionment of these former PCI voters

> "was influenced by local Communists' inability to understand in non-negative terms modes of behaviour, exchange and production that are strongly informed by a high degree of individuality and independence." (Pardo 1993: 90)

What is undoubtable is that the PCI still considered industrial development as the socio-economic panacea for the city and a means of forging collective class consciousness.

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[8] In particular, the right wing Amendola faction, politically strong in Naples, had traditionally been disdainful of a '*sottoproletariato*' which it saw as contaminating collective working-class aspirations (Geremicca 1977).

This directly affected its attitude towards the large swathes of non-industrial and precarious working classes in the *centro storico*.

In the 1990s this attitude appeared to change. The ideological transformation of the post-communist left and its search for wider social constituencies, the direct-election of the mayor which changed the relationship with voters and, above all, the focus on a tourist and cultural revival of the *centro storico* as a route to economic recovery, spelt a shift in the representation of the *quartieri* and their inhabitants during the Bassolino administration. Bassolino aimed to build cross-class consensus around a moderate political agenda which drew on hitherto neglected issues of culture, legality and civic pride. Where the 'popular classes' had once been defined in socio-economic terms (in 1980 he had contrasted their "precarious equilibrium" and "self-regulation of poverty" to an organized combative working class (Bassolino 1980: 28)), they were now addressed as "Neapolitans", "citizens", "young people" or (in the case of non-voters) as "children" (Bassolino 1996b). The personal popularity of Bassolino was actually very strong in the *quartieri*; in fact, on the mayor' re-election in 1997, the traditionally right wing neighbourhoods such as Mercato and San Lorenzo registered the highest levels of converted voters (Savino 1998). However, the discourse of municipal citizenship set limits around definitions of Naples and Neapolitan-ness and tended to benefit certain groups such as the middle classes, tourist and cultural operators (Pasotti 2000). For instance general appeals to legality, from respect for the highway code to legal working practices, reinforced the marginal position of many dwellers of the *quartieri* whose survival strategies or uses of urban space stood outside the realm of formal law.

The reimaging of the *centro storico* as a site of cultural and civic heritage effectively excluded long-standing relationships with the centro storico which did not accord with officially promoted visions of the city. Bassolino claimed that prior to its renovation, the *centro storico* represented "the city's abandoned heritage" (Bassolino 1999: 13). This was echoed by Mirella Barracco, president of Napoli 99, who argued that the *Monumenti Porte Aperte* programmes in the early 1990s had enabled Neapolitans to "suddenly gain awareness" of the *centro storico* which was no longer the "inaccessible ghetto" it was in the 1980s (Barracco 1999: 77). While Pardo claims that the "*popolino*" had long taken pride in their city (1993: 88), the suggestion here was that certain people had not possessed the *correct* awareness. In a debate with local intellectuals over how to

instigate 'civic-minded behaviour' among Neapolitans (and especially with regard to pedestrianized zones), the vice-mayor Riccardo Marone argued that educative programmes and controls should focus on those neighbourhoods "where cultural sensitivity was lower" (Colella 1999: 36). The Urban Programme offered an opportunity to structurally transform two neighbourhoods of the *centro storico* both for residents and city users, but it was hoped that, with the right educative measures, it would lead to a greater respect of the environment and the public realm. According to Elisabetta Gambardella, the DS president of the district council Avvocata-Montecalvario, the Spanish Quarters not only suffered from insufficient hygienic and social facilities, crime and unemployment but from "a lack of belonging and a sense of resentment" (Montalto 2000: 166) which was exemplified by the habit among old women of throwing bags of rubbish from their windows into the streets below:

> "It is pointless modernizing a building, rearranging a street, making a piazza beautiful if the citizen is not willing to show respect." (ibid.: 167).

Significantly, both Marone and Gambardella distinguish the *quartieri* from the "civic-minded" upper-middle-class neighbourhood of Chiaia[9]. It would seem that while there was an absence of *class* consciousness according to PCI orthodoxy, certain Neapolitans now lacked *civic* consciousness.

Although not explicitly part of official political discourse (of course, Bassolino could not afford to alienate a large section of voters), a tendency to reframe (and confirm) the 'lowness' of the neighbourhood residents into a discourse about decorum surfaced in debates over public space, especially those places associated with regeneration. This was demonstrated in Piazza Plebiscito, where the young assailants of *La Montagna del Sale* (identified as *scugnizzi* and therefore from the *quartieri*) were repelled by 'civic guards'. Piazza Bellini, on the edge of the *centro antico* and close to Montesanto, was another significant case. The city's first pedestrianized piazza symbolized the beginning of the reclamation of the *centro storico*. A line of bars, some hosting civic associations and bookshops, were opened on one side and became a popular nocturnal haunt for young Neapolitans and the local cultural and political elite, as well as, significantly, a

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[9] Gambardella states: "The problem is all over Naples, but if I'm around Via dei Mille or Piazza dei Martiri [Chiaia] I certainly won't notice this diseducation which is perhaps due to the area's wealth, a more efficient refuse collection, but certainly the result of a common sense of respect towards the city which is perhaps lacking among the inhabitants of the *quartieri*." (Montalto 2000: 168)

base for Bassolino's election campaign in 1993. Besides this new group of users, the piazza also attracted '*ragazzi dei quartieri*' who would congregate at night on scooters to smoke weed. With the return of the 'abject', tensions rose. At the end of October 1999 a habitué of one of the bars was murdered in the piazza after a violent argument. The fact that the victim was killed by his partner did not prevent a public outcry amongst bar owners and their illustrious clients (see *Corriere del Mezzogiorno* 31/10/99 – 5/11/99) who blamed the neighbourhood youths for general disturbances and called for a permanent police presence in the piazza. Their unruly presence was considered 'out-of-place'. Amato Lamberti, the Green Party president of the Province of Naples (and former assessor in the first Bassolino adminstration), exclaimed:

> "The other day I suddenly noticed that the piazza had been taken over by groups of lowbrows, drug dealers and lumpenproletarians..Piazza Bellini was once the perfect place to observe the multifarious world of young people. But now, under the eyes of everyone, it has been engulfed by urban decay (*degrado*) ofthe surrounding areas." (ibid. 3/11/99)

In terms of tourism, the *quartieri* remained a source of attraction and repulsion. On the one hand, they contributed to the vitality of the *centro storico* and therefore potentially represented an asset, but on the other, their association with illegality and transgression also offered a negative image for tourists. In a front-page article of the *Corriere del Mezzogiorno* entitled "Fascinating Ambiguity" (25/4/00), Attilio Wanderlingh (the owner of one of the bars in Piazza Bellini who had organized a public meeting after the murder) claims that tourists who visited the *centro storico* were wary of wandering into side alleyways. He admits that a fully-fledged tourist city might lead to a further social and spatial cleavage in the centre but that this could be abated "if we instead tried to revive and ennoble the most authentic popular traditions and translate them into occasions which attract tourists and encourage social reintegration" (ibid.). In perhaps an extreme and isolated but nevertheless indicative case, two streets in the Spanish Quarters were specially lit (and patrolled by municipal police) on the same evening in spring 2000 that the new lighting in Piazza Plebiscito was inaugurated. Visitors therefore had the chance to observe a *vicoli* scene at night with the assurance that they were not in any danger.

Inside the *quartieri* themselves, the administration introduced various measures aimed at socially integrating the populations with the rest of the city. In 1998, two electric

mini-bus lines provided the Spanish Quarters with its first ever public transport service. *La Repubblica* quipped that this 'autonomous republic' had finally bowed to the authority of the state (for the first week the buses had to be escorted by police cars in order to unblock the route). On occasions, the administration also attempted to regulate public behaviour and collective practices. Apart from increasing the police presence in areas associated with petty crime, for instance in front of the funicular station in Piazza Montesanto, it has taken more affirmative action such as stopping the traditonal building and lighting of bonfires by children in the piazzas of the Spanish Quarters for the Feast of Sant'Antonio. As Stefano De Matteis suggests, the ban involved imposing normative notions of urban space:

> "This year the spontaneous and traditional practice was prevented from taking place for security reasons...Instead an 'official' fire was lit, cordoned off and controlled which perhaps was supposed to serve as an official sign of the normalization of urban life." (De Matteis 1995: 17)

In general, it would however seem that the *quartieri* were left to their own devices. Some of the more drastic measures backfired or simply did not work. A crackdown on contraband cigarette sellers at the beginning of 1994 led to a mass revolt and had to be abandoned. Due to the lack of formal employment, the Bassolino administration was forced to maintain, to a certain extent, a laissez-faire policy towards illegal and semi-illegal activities. Attempts to quell, or at least censure, aberrant forms of collective behaviour mostly took place in those spaces with strongly classified symbolic boundaries where transgression was more likely to be experienced. Hence, while complaints would sometimes be voiced over the motorized incursions into Piazza Plebiscito or over the mass infringement of the 1999 motorcycle helmet law in the city's main streets (which according the stream of newpaper articles reinstated Naples as the "capital of transgression"), the apparent total disregard for the highway code in the *quartieri*, where one-way and no-entry signs were but colourful additions to the urban landscape, would proceed unabated and unnoticed[10]. Where formal, legal boundaries were ineffectual, these were replaced by unofficial norms and codes which regulated the social organization of urban space and redefined the 'place' of transgression. This is

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[10] The wearing of motorcycle headgear, which in some neighbourhoods was once perceived as a 'device' used by hired killers to conceal their identity, was now more commonly a sign of non-indigenous residents (myself included) or outsiders visiting the area or in transit. The 'refusal' to wear helmets among dwellers of the *quartieri* cannot be simply understood as a disdain for the law but reflects a particular relationship with the *motorino*. This was less a personal form of transport for getting from A (home) to B (work) than a rapid (and often shared) instrument for negotiating networks and movement within the neighbourhood (Rossi Doria 1999a: 161-63).

why the common association of the 'illegal' car park with disorder is meaningless. Anyone who has parked a car in the *quartieri* will know that there are intricate rules and pecuniary obligations governing the temporary occupation of the roadside.

Bassolino insisted that the conservation of the *centro storico* directly implied the preservation of its social composition (although this same claim was made by the supporters of the *Regno del Possibile*) whereas for most of the twentieth century, the inhabitants of the *quartieri* were viewed in urban plans and political strategies as simply displaceable. However, they also presented a dilemma for the regeneration of the *centro storico*: while they embodied a quintessential aspect of Naples and Neapolitanness, certain forms of behaviour were considered damaging to attempts at reimaging the city. Although this has been most apparent in symbolic sites, as improvements to the *quartieri* have been carried out, debates about the meaning of the city and universal appeals to civicness spread accordingly. This was also intimated in Bassolino's argument for involving local young people and children in the cultural programmes in the *centro storico*: "in these areas we have to build a new mentality and introduce a system of rules which is best achieved by investing in the younger generations" (1996b: 67).

10.3 Montesanto and the Ventaglieri Project

The idea of the '*vecchio quartiere popolare*' is less likely to bring to mind Montesanto than the Spanish Quarters, Sanità, Forcella or Mercato where images of crime (all are, or have been, closely associated with the Camorra) jostle with figures of folklore and culture such as the actor Totò or the playwright Eduardo de Filippo. Montesanto does not possess the (in)famous reputatation of these neighbourhoods, neither is it as sprawling or physically dense. Nevertheless, Montesanto was as much threatened with *sventramenti* during the twentieth century as the other areas and plays its own part in *centro storico* myths[11]. Its immediate impact is less '*popolare*'. This is mainly because, more than any other neighbourhood, Montesanto is a place of daily transit for thousands of people who use its transport systems. After Piazza Garibaldi, it is the most important public transport hub in the *centro storico* with the funicular to Vomero, the Cumana and Circumflegrea railway station serving the suburbs and towns to the west of Naples and the underground line linking the Central Station with Campi Flegrei Station and Pozzuoli. It is more socially heterogeneous. There is a larger amount of higher quality housing stock compared with the Spanish Quarters or the Sanità, while the presence of a University faculty building, one of the busiest hospitals in the city centre and the recently reopened Teatro Bracco attract a wider variety of users. It is also visited by outsiders for its fruit, vegetable and fish markets, clothes shops, specialist shops such as comic stores and international delicatessens, and cheap *pizzerie*. The impact of immigration over the last two decades is particularly noticeable in the area. Of the various national groups present in Montesanto, which include Sri Lankans and Dominicans, the Cape Verdeans are the most numerous and appear to be the most 'integrated' in the daily life of the neighbourhood. These frequent the bars and *pizzerie* around Piazza Montesanto as well as their own spaces such as a small telephone centre off Via Ventaglieri. Evidence of their interaction with the community was when condolence notices were put up along Via Ventaglieri following the death of a Cape Verdean child.

Available statistical information is misleading because it refers to administrative districts which cover large disparate urban areas and not to neighbourhoods which do

not possess official borders. Montesanto straddles the districts of Avvocata and Montecalvario. Avvocata comprises Materdei, which is partly made up of early twentieth century housing blocks more similar to those of Vomero than to those of the city centre, while Montecalvario includes part of the Spanish Quarters. What is worth underlining is that the two districts have the second and third highest densities in the city: at the end of 1997, Montecalvario had 29,745 inhabitants per square kilometre and Avvocata 28,798 (Comune di Napoli 1998: 47), despite recording a dramatic decrease in population during the post war period[12]. The population estimates for Montesanto depend on differing definitions of its boundaries. Prior to the earthquake, its population was calculated to be just under ten thousand although this corresponded to an area which comprised the 'Cavone' to the north and excluded the Pignasecca to the south (Provitera et al. 1978). Following the dispersal caused by the earthquake and a continuing net fall in population in the last two decades which has not been offset by the rising number of middle classes, immigrants and students moving into the area, this figure would today be nearer to 8,000. As far as the socio-economic situation is concerned, it would seem that the recent levels of infant mortality and stillborn babies are negligible and cannot be used as indicators of poverty as they have been in the recent past (Chubb 1982), while according to the 1991 census, official unemployment had increased but was not as chronic as other central districts or working class suburbs: compared to a city average of 42.7%, Avvocata registered 37.4% and Montecalvario 46.4% (Istat 1995).

DAMM and the Ventaglieri project lie on the Avvocata side of Montesanto between the 'sub-quarters' of Ventaglieri and Tarsia. This part of the neighbourhood is less traversed by traffic than the southern part around the market of Pignasecca. There is a study of this micro-area in the Confindustria journal *Orizzonti Economici* in 1983, which is very helpful because it gives a glimpse of attitudes about the area's renovation prior to the start of work on the Ventaglieri project as well as a detailed social portrait of the zone. According to its author, Gennaro Biondi, the area, like most of the *centro storico*, had been subjected to a disorderly development (Biondi 1983: 80). Although dotted with shops and artisans' workshops, it was primarily a residential area of approximately

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[11] Pignasecca and Piazza Montesanto have traditionally been considered the haunts of pickpocketers and petty thieves. Myth has it that Pignasecca derives its name from the pine tree where thieves once would hang their booty. The tree was said to have dried up in the face of sinful acts.

[12] Montecalvario's population drops from 52,492 in 1951 to 22,309 by the end of 1997, while the figure for Avvocata over the same period drops from 59,892 to 28,798.

3,000 inhabitants. Most spent the day outside the sub-quarter in the Pignasecca and the *centro antico*. There was therefore less of a 'alleyway life' than in other neighbourhoods. The physical state of buildings varied from street to street. Former courtiers' palaces lined the principal arteries of Via Ventaglieri and Salita Tarsia. While the upper floors had recently attracted many residents from outside the neighbourhood (in particular, students, intellectuals and left wing political militants who were drawn by the area's proximity to the centre and the University and because rents offered better value for money), much of the ground floor space had long been converted into dwellings, including *bassi*, which had not only led to overcrowding but had disfigured the "architectural dignity" of buildings (ibid.: 80). Nevertheless, most living quarters met minimum standards. They all had running water, washing facilities and most had hot water, gas and a telephone. However, Biondi noted that the area in the worst physical state was Via Avellino a Tarsia and this justified the clearance for the proposed project.

"Here the buildings are nearly all derelict and living conditions are at the limits of decency..The sense of abandonment is immediately perceptible and this is accompanied by a general sense of disaffection among inhabitants." (ibid.: 81)

Although the residents supposedly interviewed were said to have voiced their allegiances to the neighbourhood, Biondi claims that they did not manifest resistance to the thought of transferal to another part of the city.

The site of the PSER project was wedged between Vico Avellino a Tarsia and Vico Lepri a Ventaglieri. Prior to the earthquake, a number of buildings on the two perimeter streets had collapsed or had been vacated due to the decrepit walls or weak bedrock. In June 1967, an empty building in Vico Lepri ai Ventaglieri which was undergoing repairs crumbled to the ground. While there were no casualties, over 150 residents from neighbouring blocks were evicted for precautionary measures. *Il Mattino* viewed the incident as a symbol of administrative negligence towards the *centro storico* and demanded immediate improvements to buildings at risk (*il Mattino* 13/7/67). The "helpless", "forgotten" residents who gathered their possessions in the street and slept in parked cars were compared with coolies, pariahs and Vietnamese refugees (ibid.). It was not until 1979 that a proposal to redesign the area was submitted to the administration after an uninhabited building collapsed in Vico Avellino a Tarsia. The earthquake caused further damage, especially at the lower level around Via Ventaglieri, and

guaranteed the area's inclusion in the 1981 reconstruction programme. Additional demolition work along the two streets left two slivers of open space separated by a sheer drop of tuff rock peppered with caverns. This enabled planners to expand the size of the project which became the largest post-earthquake intervention in the *centro storico*. Whereas the other handful of schemes mostly concentrated on the restoration or construction of single buildings, the official aim here was to provide the area with public facilities which would eliminate "situations of urban squalor" (Dispoto 1991: 100). According to the urban planners, the construction of new residential units was not a plausible option because these would have created serious health and safety risks in an already overcrowded area (Ferulano 1991: 106):

> "In the vast cleared space, the task was to formulate a multifunctional project which would restore the historical value of the landscape, increase the minimal level of services and green space in the area and offer an urban "void" in a congested part of the city." (ibid.)

The description of the site as a 'liberated void' (rather than 'public space') is highly significant. The clearance of the area led to the displacement of almost one hundred families; the majority of whom were eventually rehoused in the city's suburbs (Ponticelli and Soccavo), provincial towns around Vesuvius and in the empty modern resorts up the coast. Mario Pochet, Montesanto resident and PCI leader on the local district council, organized protest campaigns with Ventagliere residents who had been either evicted or who had not been provided with satisfactory alternative accomodation. Whereas the earthquake had led to an uprooting of people which seriously disrupted the social and economic structure of the area, for the planners it instead offered a one-off occasion to experiment in the *centro storico*. Giancarlo Ferulano, in the architectural journal *Architettura Quaderni*, interprets the metamorphosis of the zone as a positive operation:

> "Although this operation led to the definitive transfer of family units to other localities, this was willingly accepted and sometimes endorsed by the inhabitants who by now were exasperated by their living conditions" (ibid.: 106).

However, the original scheme, which envisaged a small park, a series of garages in the converted caves and a theatre, did not involve public consultation and was opposed by local residents. Pochet mobilized the campaign against this 'planned space':

"A two-year battle was waged against the project which succeeded in preventing the construction of a theatre. There was already a theatre down the road – the Bracco – so what was the point of building another one? Five or six buildings were saved from demolition where families evicted after the earthquake were able to return. A primary school was built in an area which had no schools. The building of the deaf and dumb was left standing where DAMM is now based, and the park was built. Therefore, in a way the project was modified from the start..In a *quartiere popolare* like ours, the first thing an institution should think about if it wants to carry out social programmes for its citizens is schools. Instead this was not initially planned." (Mario Pochet, interview, 11/8/99)

Pochet admits that there were tensions between the ground-level opposition among PCI activists in the *circoscrizione* and the Valenzi administration. This reflected a general hostility among militants in the *centro storico* who protested against the local government's insufficient action in neighbourhoods after the earthquake (Belli 1986: 128). Nevertheless, he claims that their principal enemy were the unaffiliated technical experts who had organized contracts for the project:

"The failure of the project meant they would have lost their fee. Therefore the main resistance was not so much against institutions and political representatives but against this technical structure." (ibid.).

Ferulano's interpretation of the project's modification is purely technical and makes no reference to the residents' campaign:

"The proposed social and cultural centre..was shelved for planning reasons (it was calculated that it would have quickly attracted a much wider user-base extending beyond the neighbourhood and therefore would have provoked congestion which the area could not have sustained) as well as a management evaluation due to the lack of assurances from the administration in offering more substantial services." (Ferulano 1991: 106).

In addition to the school, a system of escalators and lifts was designed to link the two levels of the neighbourhood. The aim of the costly and ambitious plan was to "increase the use of the park to a wider age group and to residents from other parts of the city" (ibid.: 107) and to stamp the whole project with a unique appeal. Ferulano, writing in 1991, when the project had still not been completed, opined:

"The eventual image of the project will feature a multitude of levels, partly constituted by the new buildings, partly by the tuff terraces..Its intricate formulation of spaces – the large clearing surrounded by trees, the flight of steps which wind around the terraces of flowering shrubs and bushes, the secluded pergolas, the panoramic viewpoints – will make it an important and certainly very particular uban form." (ibid.).

The Ventaglieri project met the fate of many other PSER interventions in the city during the 1980s which turned into opportunities to syphen public money (Barbagallo 1997b). and suffered from cursory, ill-conceived planning decisions and protracted, uncontrolled work (Dal Piaz and Apreda 1993). According to a DAMM activist and local resident, the work in Montesanto was drawn out even further because the Camorra had a hand in the matter and managed to guarantee locals employment on the site. The project, cordoned off to the public, was forgotten:

> "It's as if this thing never existed. I basically discovered it by chance even though I lived only a few metres away, but it was closed off. I remember one evening when these gigantic lorries arrived carrying the escalators and had to spend over an hour manoeuvring into the alleyway. Everyone knew that they were part of some project but nobody knew what it was about.. Residents had been moved out. My brother was sent to Sant'Anastasia [a town near Vesuvius].. Anyway the area was abandoned. In fact young people and children used to call it the "*sgarrupato*" – which means broken – and some still do." (Maurizio, interview, 1/8/99)

Most of the structural work in Montesanto was completed by 1993. Few of the PSER projects were actually opened to the public because of the lack of political will and management skills in the local government (Dal Piaz and Apreda 1993). At the beginning of 1994, the Bassolino administration inaugurated a number of post-earthquake parks in the periphery as part of its first hundred-day plan. Bassolino considered these openings as symbolic gestures which signalled a breach with the past:

> "It was a very important period which demonstrated that it was possible to do many things even with few resources – often at zero cost – using the personnel of the administration in a new way and creating a different relationship with the city." (Bassolino 1996b: 17)

However, the new structure that was to eventually be christened the "Parco Ventaglieri" was not among those to be opened to the public.

Chapter 11: Diego Armando Maradona Montesanto (DAMM): Collective Action over Public Space in Montesanto

11.1 *Centri sociali* and radical urban politics in the 1990s

On 25th August 1995, the former institute for the deaf at the top end of the PSER project was occupied by a small group of local residents and students. The park was opened to the neighbourhood with an inaugural party and the three-storey building was declared a '*centro sociale occupato autogestito*' (occupied and self-managed social centre).

In July 2001 there were over one hundred *centri sociali* across Italy; from more than a dozen in cities such as Milan and Rome to single examples in small provincial towns. At a very generic level, *centri sociali* refer to empty premises – usually factories or state buildings such as schools – occupied by groups of predominantly young people which are reused for political, social and cultural purposes. They are characterized by activists' insistence on autonomous collective organization. Weekly '*assemblee di autogestione*' (meetings of self-management) held by the '*occupanti*' (occupants) determine the specific direction of the *centro sociale*. Practical and theoretical issues are debated, activities within and beyond its boundaries are planned and means of financial self-support are proposed.

The *centri sociali* have their roots in the radical political and cultural upheavals of the 1970s (Lumley 1990). The occupation of buildings in the city during this decade had been a means of creating autonomous spheres and solidarity networks among young people unrepresented (and unrepresentable) by traditional forms of organization. Their demands were no longer defined in purely quantitative terms, such as a roof over heads, but as the need to self-organize social lives, to independently pursue political agendas and directly participate in cultural production and consumption. At the same time, they became refuges for far left political groups including *Autonomia Operaia* and remnants of new left groups such as *Lotta Continua* (Lodi and Grazioli 1984). During the 1980s they represented bastions of cultural and social opposition to the mass retreat into the private domain. They organized assistance to combat the rise of heroin addiction and played an important role in the peace and anti-nuclear protests (Dines 1999). Although a few of the original *centri sociali* have 'resisted' through to the present, such as

Leoncavallo in Milan (first occupied in 1975 although forced to change premises on three occasions), they did not become a widespread national phenomena until the beginning of the 1990s. The national Pantera Student movement of 1990, which resulted in month-long occupations of universities across Italy, had an influential role: stimulating a revisiting and reappraisal of past traditions and fostering new forms of protest. During the first part of the decade, and in the face of the crisis of left parties, the *centri sociali* became a 'melting pot' for counter-hegemonic urban currents and the base for cultural and recreational activities that were either inexistent or inaccessible in the rest of the city. 'Alternative' forms and modes of cultural production were practiced and promoted, such as the experimentation with new technologies and music. For instance rap groups formed by activists, like 99 Posse which came out of the experience of Officina 99 in Naples, helped popularize the issue of *centri sociali*.

The *centri sociali* were not simply a residue of the 1970s, nor were they merely a collective expression of 'post-material society' (Melucci 1984). Past traditions and practices were reformulated within shifting contexts – structural transformations to the urban built environment and labour market, the rise of new technologies and the presence of new social actors such as immigrants – which in turn generated emergent forms of collective action. Many *centri sociali* assumed more offensive positions than in the past. During the course of the 1990s they were instrumental in political mobilizations over immigrant rights (where left parties were often absent), the organization of anti-war demonstrations and, most recently, of "anti-globalization" protests. Traditional forms of protest such as the '*corteo*' (march) were interwoven with new strategies like the '*tute bianche*' (white overalls)[13], while different methods of communication (in particular internet and video) combined with the more traditional plethora of publications, newspapers and leaflets in creating extensive alternative circuits of information. Whereas in the 1970s, the *centro sociale* was conceived primarily as a space of social gatherings, during the 1990s the term simultaneously referred to the occupied building, the group of occupants, a form of collective action, as well as a counter hegemonic identity.

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[13] These refer to the clothing worn by activists from a number of northern Italian *centri sociali* during direct action protests – such as the scaling of the walls of immigrant detention centres – and more traditional demonstrations. Emphasis is placed on the collective communicative impact of this attire which at the same time conceals the individual identity of protesters (Centro Sociale Leoncavallo 1999: 41).

However, since their outset, the *centri sociali* have been a complex, contradictory phenomena which defy univocal definitions. All the irreconcilable contradictions of the 1970s – the 'here and now' and the 'revolutionary', irony and militant dogmatism, personal politics and collective action, spritual retreat and confrontational violence – as well potentially conflicting currents, such as punks and *autonomi*, 'flowed' into the *centri sociali* (Lodi and Grazioli 1984; Zaccaria 1997). During the 1990s, the *centro sociali* would become increasingly distinguishable on political grounds: libertarian, anarchist, communist, post-autonomist, 'non-ideological'; over their relationship with institutions: hostile, pragmatic, strategic; and over their principal objectives: cultural, political, social. At the same time, these tensions would often be present within individual *centri sociali*, leading in some cases to internal groups breaking away and founding new occupations.

The majority of available literature as well as national media interest focuses on the long-established post-autonomist *centri sociali* in Milan and, to a lesser degree, Rome and Turin. Leoncavallo in Milan is considered by many to be the archetypal *centro sociale* but in reality reflects a particular tradition and agenda. At the end of the 1990s Leoncavallo together with centres in the Veneto region (which in 1998 formed themselves into the grouping '*Centri Sociali del Nord Est*') opened dialogues with left parties with the aim of building strategic alliances and elevating their impact on society (Centro Sociale Leoncavallo 1999) [14]. This provoked a deepening of existant divisions and led to major split between former allies.

It would be possible to trace some general geographical variations. The strategies, agendas and language of Neapolitan *centri sociali* have contrasted to those in the North. The act of squatting property had been a less 'spectacular' form of collective action in Naples, where the mass occupations of public housing projects were frequent from the 1970s onwards, than elsewhere. Two of the city's most active *centri sociali* in the 1990s, Officina 99 and lo Ska ('Laboratorio Occupato di Sperimentazione di Kultura Antagonista'), together drew on the extreme positions of *Autonomia Operaia* and forged a close relationship with the radical faction of the Organized Unemployed

[14] In 1999, these *centri sociali* coordinated a series of spectacular 'raids' against immigrant detention centres across Italy, which led, for the first time, to debates over the matter in the mainstream press. As with numerous other protests, the involvement of individual members of parliament (from Rifondazione Comunista and the Green Party) ensured greater public impact.

Movement. By the end of the 1990s the two considered themselves part of the "*area antagonista*" in contradistinction to the various *centri sociali* in the North which had sought working alliances with institutions[15]. Nevertheless, different tendencies existed within Naples, as they did in other large cities. In contrast to Officina 99 and lo Ska, DAMM did not consider political ideology a means for mobilization and was not alligned to any other *centro sociale* in Italy. Its links with the past were less direct. Activists claimed to feel affinity with the neighbourhood-based campaigns of the early 1970s and their tactics such as '*autoriduzione*' (the unilateral reduction of prices of services and goods) as well as the ludic and ironic elements of the 1977 youth movement, rather than the ideological aspects of the more explicitly political currents. But, as in the other two cases, it was first a Neapolitan and secondly a national tradition which was recuperated.

Describing *centri sociali* as a national 'social movement', as has been the case with recent research (Ruggiero 2000; Berzano and Gallini 2000), therefore raises problems. The idea of 'movement' has been used to counter the labelling of *centri sociali* as drug-ridden, subversive and marginalized (Ruggiero 2000: 171-2)[16] so as to highlight their sociological significance. The theoretical debates on social movements (Melucci 1981, 1984; Castells 1983, 1997a) offer a set of heuristic tools to examine the interplay between political and social conflict and cultural identity, group solidarity, the contestation of urban codes and the formulation of "antagonistic languages and symbols" (Melucci 1981: 193), the mobilization of resources and the independent mediation with institutional actors. But the deployment of the 'social movement' as a catch-all concept cannot apprehend the heterogeneity of the *centri sociali*. It would be more accurate to talk of a 'network' of disparate tendencies which are united around the common denominators of "*occupazione*" and "*autogestione*".

The category of youth has frequently been used to encompass the diversity of the *centri sociali*. As a biological, cultural and sociological concept, youth is identified as a

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[15] For a more detailed discussion of Neapolitan *centri sociali* see my article: Dines 1999.

[16] The common media images during the early 1990s of *centri sociali* as havens of marginalized youths have filtered into academic responses to the phenomenon. For instance, in a entry on Italian rap music in the Encyclopedia of Contemporary Italian Culture, the *centro sociale* is described as an "occupied drop-in centre" for "marginalized youth and the socially disaffected" (Moliterno 2000: 496-7). Research carried out jointly by *centri sociali* and sociologists in Milan discovered that users were not markedly different in terms of employment and education to non-users, thus contradicting the social stigma usually associated with them (Guarnieri Gomma 1996).

particular passage in life distinguished by a set of presumed idiosyncracies such as a propensity for transgression, experimentation and innovation which enable and legitimate certain forms of social action such as the occupation of urban spaces. In the past, the *centri sociali* were examined within an "area of youth movement" in order to interpret the transformations of a post-68 'generation' (Lodi and Grazioli 1984). However, a similar approach to examining the phenomena in the 1990s would be reductive and would not be able to capture the dynamic nature of the *centri sociali*. Activists are only classifiable as youths, or rather '*giovani*', because the socio-cultural threshold of adulthood in Italy has risen since the 1970s, largely due to the delayed access and alternative points of entry into the job market (Cristante 1995). In fact the majority of activists in the *centri sociali* in Milan and Naples were, on average, in their late twenties and thirties (Guarnieri Gomma 1996; Dines 1999). More importantly, the notion of 'youth' is not a basis of self-perception which, according to Lodi and Grazioli, was the case during the early 1980s. Rather, the formation of a *centro sociale* is intercrossed by various factors. For instance, while some activists in Officina 99 and lo Ska may have described themselves as 'young', this was considered contingent to other factors such as political orientation and social background and was not conceived as constituting the identity of the *centro sociale* (Dines 1999).

In terms of this research, the *centri sociali's* relationship with the city is the specific focus of interest. The appropriation and defence of urban space is a constant feature of every *centro sociale* and the platform from which activists deal with outsiders. Besides political and cultural programmes, *centri sociali* are also involved in more local, less ambitious issues regarding the ordering and the use of the city. Don Mitchell argues that material public space is fundamental for alternative collective action "to arise and contest issues of citizenship and democracy" (1995: 117). He argues that the Tiananmen Square protests would not have become such a momentuous political and media event if the physical space had not been taken over in the first place (ibid.: 123). Unlike Tiananmen Square, the *centri sociali's* occupation of space is not linked to a singular moment of protest but involves the construction, over a daily basis, of an alternative agenda and discursive arena. For most of the time, the *centro sociale's* presence in the city is ignored. It is during key episodes such as the initial occupation and attempted (or successful) evictions, or organized political protests and cultural events, that the *centri sociali* become a focus of public attention. The *centro sociale* is not simply an

alternative autonomous sphere but a "space for representation" (ibid.: 115), a place "that allows [collective action] to be seen..where it can represent itself to a larger population…where it becomes a public" (ibid.).

The *centro sociale's* relationship to the built environment is conceived in various ways. For Officina 99 and Lo Ska, the urban dimension was the place where political struggles were conducted. Officina 99 occupied in May 1991 an abandoned factory in the eastern industrial suburb of Gianturco. The choice of this run-down industrial location was primarily symbolic: a stimulus to conspicuously project alternative notions of urbanity in the shadow of the high-rise development of the Centro Direzionale. Lo Ska, on the other hand, occupied a disused University building close to Piazza Gesù in February 1995. Its location in the *centro antico*, a few yards from a number of tourist attractions including the Monastery of Santa Chiara, gave the space greater visibility and enabled it to play on the contradictions and consequences of the area's increasing symbolic and material value. Activists were briefly involved in the organization of protests of removal workers who had been evicted from their traditional pitches in Piazza Gesù Nuovo following the council's decision to turn part of the piazza into a tourist coach park. However, the attempts of both *centri sociali* to build a closer rapport with locals were ultimately undermined by their explicitly militant political agenda.

In the case of DAMM, it was the social reality of Montesanto which influenced the shape of many initiatives and elicited a more pragmatic approach. This aspect was drawn upon by activists to distinguish themselves from other occupations.

"When you work in a neighbourhood you have to confront its contradictions..Officina would never have been the same Officina if it had been located in a neighbourhood like Montesanto." (Luca, interview).

Alongside the organization of public events, DAMM built an alternative urban project through the appropriation and redefintion of the planned (but abandoned) space of the Ventaglieri Project.

11.2 The creation of a *centro sociale* in Montesanto

The analysis that follows of DAMM draws on written material produced during the occupation (posters, leaflets and short books), press articles, extended periods of participant observation (which involved attendance of weekly meetings as well as cultural and political activities) and in-depth interviews with principal activists (for list of informants see appendix). 'DAMM' is used to indicate the collective postions of occupants; where these are divergent, this is made clear by referring to 'activists'. As observers have noted, *centri sociali* have traditionally eschewed analysis by others (Ruggiero 2000; Berzano and Galliani). It must be stressed that this examination of DAMM does not intend in any way to be a definitive study of what has been a contradictory and fragmented experience (largely as a result of its location within a *quartiere popolare*). Rather, by drawing on various registers – from the communicative rhetoric of leaflets to the more reflective accounts of publications and personal positions discussed in interviews – the aim is to concentrate on the emergence of alternative ideas about public space in the *centro storico*.

The occupation of DAMM was initially provoked by the lure of the abandoned project's incongruous position in the heart of Montesanto. The site was in a state of total dereliction. The unused escalators had been vandalized and the incomplete top gardens were littered with used syringes. The three storey '*palazzina*' had been planned as a sports centre but was never consigned to the council because of numerous structural irregularities. All its doors were off their hinges and its windows smashed. The reclaiming of the space was initially seen as a challenge and not a political project; as is made evident in this epic, personal account of one of the main activists:

"This park was in the middle of my neighbourhood: 10.000 unguarded square metres, two buildings and the odd flowerbed, flights of steps that embraced a mountain of tuffaceous rock. A series of terraces covered with plants overlooked a large esplanade at the bottom of the site. I'd often go to have a look at the place. At the time I was running a Theatre of the Oppressed workshop at Officina 99 and once, when I took the guys along, we talked about occupyng it. I wasn't the type to hang around discussing but I didn't have any first-hand experience of occupations..That time we fantasized, but I continued to look for people. Every so often I'd go back to the park with some dreamer until one day I went with the right person. His name was Fiore. We were there one dawn in May after a night spent wandering through the city and we saw the sunlight shine through the sea of syringes and rubbish that had been thrown on the ground. The Yellow Giant wanted to live and spoke to us through this mire. Fiore decided he wanted to make a film. He had some spare reels of film. "I'm on for it, let's occupy!""(Braucci 1998).

The choice of name, Diego Armando Maradona, aimed to appeal to everybody. This was a *centro sociale* named in honour of Naples' idolized hero who had recently left the city. On a nearby street corner, a mock shrine painted after the first championship in 1987 depicts the Argentinian footballer in the arms of the city's patron San Gennaro. The name underlined a distaste for the political sloganeering considered endemic among orthodox *centri sociali*. More significantly, it reflected a wish for open dialogue with the neighbourhood; as one of its first leaflets announced: "Maradona has returned to Naples to play with Neapolitans". It was also a conscious means of attracting the attention of the national and local media which viewed the experience as a modern folkloric curiosity rather than a form of political action. The national edition of *Corriere della Sera*, which ran a report on the *centro sociale* a month after the occupation, noted: "Everyone loved [Maradona], nobody had forgotten him, and many still have his photo on their walls" (22/9/95). The reference to the footballer was, however, later assimilated into the acronym 'DAMM'.

The northern part of Montesanto had a history of collective urban activism. Gennaro Biondi's 1983 survey of the area mentioned two significant political experiences: the 'Mensa dei Bambini Proletari' founded in 1973 by students and intellectuals and located one hundred metres from DAMM[17], and the city's first *comitati di quartiere* between 1972 and 1973[18]. One can also add the local section of the PCI which mobilized residents after the earthquake and often found itself in conflict with the left wing administration. While none of these experiences directly influenced the creation of DAMM, the occupation of the space, as well as informal contacts with past activists such as Mario Pochet and the nationally renowned cultural critic Goffredo Fofi who had been involved with the Mensa, acted to resurrect this local radical tradition. As Dolores Hayden argues:

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[17] The association, which survived on donations from private donors and limited funds from the council, provided daily hot meals and a place to meet and play for over 100 children from the local area (Stazio and Traiola 1981: 137). In addition, it served as a local base for organized unemployed and feminist groups (Fofi 1999), regularly organized political and cultural debates and participated in neighbourhood events such as the pedestrian campaigns in 1978 to reclaim the steps beind Montesanto funicular station (Capasso et al. 1982).

"An ordinary urban neighbourhood will also contain the history of activists who have campaigned against spatial injustices..Every city and town has..landmarks where territorial struggles have been waged." (Hayden 1995: 39)

The Ventaglieri Project was one such landmark. If it had not been for the campaign led by Pochet, the *palazzina* later occupied by DAMM would not have existed. But while this past battle had been over the contents of the project and had been concerned primarily with questions of collective consumption, DAMM assumed a direct managing role, opening the top end of the site to the public, and oriented its collective action around less material issues of (self-)representation and autonomy.

The 'life story' of DAMM can be divided into three main phases. The first few months between 1995 and 1996 were a period of mobilization. Large weekly meetings of up to fifty people put forward a myriad of ideas and projects. Adjustments to the spartan *palazzina*, such as rewiring and basic decorating, were carried out by activists themselves and equipment was gradually installed, including makeshift theatre seating and lighting, in order to convert the building into a base for activities. Following this initial moment of chaotic euphoria up to 1998, the occupation steadily developed. A daily programme of social and cultural activities was funded by frequent concerts and other social events, a core group of activists emerged and important contacts were made with public figures in Naples. From 1999 to 2000, DAMM appeared to consolidate its organizational strengths, concentrated on activities considered most important (such as the campaigns to improve the park) and abandoned the more ambitious and popular public events which were considered an excessive expenditure of energies and financially unworthwhile.

The occupation evolved out of a confluence of individual experiences. Some activists had previously been involved with Officina 99 but had clashed with its explicitly political orientation, while others had joined with proposals for social projects in the local area. In 1999 there were approximately twenty core activists, while about one hundred people had participated at some stage in the occupation. This was a socially heterogeneous group comprising university students, unemployed graduates, skilled and manual labourers, social workers, actors and writers all of whom were aged in their

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[18] Biondi argued that these various experiences contributed towards the shift to the left in the city during the mid-seventies, although he was sceptical about the extent of their relationship with local residents (Biondi 1983: 81).

twenties or thirties. Nearly all were Neapolitan in contrast to lo Ska and Officina 99 where many actvists hailed from neighbouring towns. Some were natives of Montesanto itself and possessed an intimate knowledge of the local area, a few moved into the neighbourhood after 1995, while others lived in residential districts such as Vomero and Soccavo.

The group of occupants possessed a range of skills and expertise (for instance in metal work, rudimentary electrical engineering, graphic design and video production) as well as a series of contacts with professionals such as theatre performers and sports intructors. These various resources were put to use in the organization of the weekly activities and services run in the *palazzina*. These included a very successful '*ludoteca*' (playroom) and '*doposcuola*' (after school) which offered recreational facilities and extra tuition for local primary school children [**fig. 4.2.**][19], a women's health group, a medical advice centre, martial arts such as Aikido, meditation evenings and yoga, dance lessons, theatre workshops and all-day cinema. A boxing gym on the top floor which trained local youths broke away from DAMM in 1998 and until early 2001 functioned separately. Other regular events included book presentations and debates on various issues from the *terzo settore* (third sector) to the Roma question in Naples. Activists also tried to deter the use of heroin and a smokable derivative 'cobret' by raising public awareness in the neighbourhood, and participated in city-wide campaigns for the decriminalization of soft drugs. Besides a constant flow of computer-designed leaflets and posters (pasted on the walls around the *centro storico* and handed out at DAMM), three books were self-published – two reflections on the occupation (DAMM 1998; 2000) and a play script (DAMM 1999) – while a short-lived newsletter *Il Ventagliere* in 1999 was distributed free at DAMM and around Montesanto [**fig. 4.3.**]. DAMM also designed its own web page, although this was rarely updated and did not provide information on weekly events. However the experimentation with new technologies was not a central concern of activities as they were, for instance, in Milan (Ruggiero

[19] The 'after-school', which ran three days a week between 1996 and 2000, involved 90 children from a primary school in the adjacent Tarsia district. During the first year it offered basic assistance with homework but the emphasis later switched to developing a series of workshops (such as puppet-making) and organizing group activities and games in the park. The basic costs of materials and refreshments were met by the children's families who paid 5,000 lire (£1.70) a month (DAMM 1998). The experience was influenced by the activists' contacts with various local experts and alternative educators such as Marco Rossi-Doria, an itinerant 'street teacher' in the Spanish Quarters who taught children who had abandoned school (Rossi-Doria 1999). With the support of some of these individuals, DAMM also organized informal training courses for new recruits and aspiring teachers.

2000)[20]. A number of short films were produced; including one shot during the occupation in 1995 and "Serial Killer do' Caffe", a film-noir parody, which was presented at the Venice Film festival in 1996. On both occasions local residents were involved in production. Besides the organization of initiatives with local children and the participation of teenagers in the running of some activities, the majority of users of DAMM were from outside the neighbourhood. While DAMM promoted an open-door policy, it was publicly scathing of non-local visitors who were only interested in attending cheap social events and consuming cut-price alcohol.

The self-management of the *palazzina* and the autonomous organization of activities were the guiding trajectory of DAMM's collective action. '*Autogestione*' endowed activities with extra meaning. The running of a theatre workshop, for instance, was not simply the provision of a cultural service but a comment on the availability, accessibility and quality of (official) alternatives. At the same time, DAMM was highly critical of the emergent *terzo settore* which, it argued, removed political autonomy, made organizations dependent on public handouts and diminished the possibilities of constructive conflict (DAMM 2000).

However, within DAMM, there were multilayered, and sometimes divergent, positions regarding the occupation and management of the space. Some of the original occupants, influenced by the spatial theories and practices of the situationists, first conceived DAMM as a sort of 'detourned' space and played on the peculiarities and absurdities of the abandoned project. This 'current' existed alongside a more explicitly political approach which sought to project alternative discourses about the city, and the constant practical concerns of maintaining and defending the occupation. The significance of '*centro sociale*' was also diversely perceived. DAMM's reluctance to wholeheartedly accept the term was largely due to its differences with other centres in Naples. One activist argued that DAMM loosely belonged to a libertarian current of *centri sociali* in contradistinction to the historic experiences in the North such as Leoncavallo and the

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[20] One activist, who set up his own digital editing studio with the help of a government grant, claimed to be the only person at DAMM interested in the possibilities of new technologies, and was disappointed at the general indifference among locals: "The telematic experiment was a sad experience for me because I realized that nobody at DAMM was interested in the issue..Apart from four boys from Tarsia [the sub-quarter at the top end of the site] who came to use Internet there was nobody. Why do you get eighty people in Milan and only eight in Naples? Because in Naples, tradition prevails." (Maurizio, interview).

"*autonomi*" of Officina 99; while another disputed its relevance, preferring the more malleable term "*zone multiple autogestite*" ('multiple self-managed zones'):

"I don't see why the *centro sociale* has to be the exclusive reference when it comes to struggles..In fact DAMM is called "self-managed zone". It doesn't mean anything. What is written does not necessarily correspond to what you are. Of course, if you have to explain to someone who asks: "what's that?" you reply "a *centro sociale occupato*"." (Maurizio)

The accomodation of internal differences was considered a principal source of DAMM's vitality:

"We refused to assume a single identity and therefore we haven't affixed symbols to our actions. Even though a symbol is easier, you accept it or reject it, you can imagine what`s behind it." (leaflet "If you managed to live this space today..", Summer 1997)

The weekly meeting was the sacrosanct arena in which potentially divisive issues, such as funds from outside donors or the illegal integrity of the occupation, were confronted, leaflets were discussed and drawn up and decisions were made. Tensions would sometimes reach boiling-point when upon (in a uproarious mêlée of Italian and Neapolitan dialect) individuals would be variously accused of middle-class 'idealism', anti-democratic boorishness, acquiescence and extremism. However, group solidarity was maintained through a common insistence on the collective management and defence of the space, and those seen to exploit the occupation for personal gain without any regard for the collective spirit were severely criticized and sometimes ostracized (which was what occurred in the case of the manager of the boxing ring). There was also a general consensus over the greater emphasis given to the quotidian, pratical and local significance of the occupation:

"We are an occupied space in a *quartiere popolare* which is working in this neighbourhood, confronting the contradictions and the real needs, separating the human requests from those of the consumer, embracing the former and scorning the latter." (leaflet, January 1996).

Despite the presence of individual standpoints, as a collective, DAMM assumed a pragmatic attitude towards mediation with institutions but was generally hostile to any form of interference. During its early phase, DAMM was courted by left wing organizations including Rifondazione Comunista. These approaches were rebuffed as purely opportunistic given that nobody had ever taken any interest in the Ventaglieri

project prior to the arrival of DAMM. At the same time, activists were equally aware that DAMM's ill-defined identity together with its popularity made it vulnerable to assimiliation:

"In contrast to other *centri sociali*, we are truly social which makes us likeable in the eyes of the city; but at the high levels of power, newspapers, the middle class, this likeableness is also the result of our weak identity. And we don't want to be liked by these people...We're not talking about hoisting red flags or setting absolute formulas but a bit of identity (ie who we are) is also built reflecting on the things which happen here everyday. We must not be shy or frightened to bring them out in public." (leaflet "Why only an illegal DAMM makes sense", January 1997)

As DAMM grew in confidence and formulated its own flexible cultural-political identity, it took a less dismissive and defensive approach to its encounters with the outside world. Indeed, it encouraged the public confrontation of ideas by presenting itself as a forum for debates. For instance, following the arson attack on the Roma camps in the run-down suburb of Scampìa in June 1999, it organized a series of meetings with voluntary groups, representatives from unions and left wing parties to organize a campaign of protest. It also forged close links with professionals such as urban planners and educationalists who supported campaigns and provided expertise (for instance in the running of the after-school activities). DAMM also had a number of 'allies' such as the urbanist Daniela Lepore and Goffredo Fofi[21] who endorsed the occupation in the local media and contributed to its impact in public debates. Fofi, for instance, wrote a full-page article for *Corriere del Mezzogiorno* in which he welcomed DAMM's endeavour to confront the contradictions in the *centro storico* through its self-management of an abandoned structure:

"[Damm is a] novel laboratory which must learn to resist the alarms or pressures from above and continue to produce an alternative culture from below, which in the present climate is increasingly rare." (*Corriere del Mezzogiorno* 10/6/98)[22]

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[21] Goffredo Fofi (born 1937 in Gubbio in Umbria) has been a charismatic figure on the Italian 'heretical' left since the early 1960s, making his name as a prolific essayist, film critic, script writer, biographer, and as a political activist and all-round polemicist. During the 1960s and 1970s he collaborated with new left journals such as *Quaderni Piacentini* and *Ombre Rosse* and was later active in the extra-parliamentary organization *Lotta Continua*. He has spent his life between Milan, Rome, Palermo and Naples where he was one of the main protagonists of the Mensa dei Bambini Proletari. During the last two decades he has set up and edited (or co-edited) a series of often short-lived cultural journals with a focus on the South. These include *La Terra Vista dalla Luna*, *Dove sta Zazà* and the current publication *lo Straniero*. He has also recently published an autobiography (Fofi 1999).

[22] Besides these 'allies', the three mainstream local newspapers (*il Mattino*, *la Repubblica* and *Corriere del Mezzogiorno*) were generally approving of DAMM. It was sometimes seen as beneficial to the local community, for instance by opening the park: "The children of Maradona save the garden" (*la Repubblica* 24/8/96) or through its 'discovery' of the heroin-based drug 'Cobret' (*il Mattino* 3/11/96). However, most interest was directed at its cultural production: "The poor film goes to the festival. In the name of

These outsiders also played an important role in securing resources for DAMM. In particular, Fofi's close contacts with cultural operators, publishers and the film industry were not only instrumental in bringing national writers and performers to DAMM but also opened up career opportunities for individual activists. Some have published work in reviews edited by Fofi himself such as *lo Straniero* and *Poco di Buono* (Braucci 1998; Peppicelli 2000). One occupant published a novel set in the loosely fictional neighbourhood 'Santo' about the interwoven lives of a drug addict and a novice *camorrista* (Braucci 1999), which received enthusiastic reviews in the national press. These experiences led to further contributions to public debates. A number of occupants have written in the local and national media on urban-related issues (*il Mattino*, *il Corriere del Mezzogiorno*, *L'Unità*). However, links with outsiders which effected the running of the occupation were negotiated collectively; and sometimes offers of financial help (for instance from the local film director Pappi Corsicato) were refused on the grounds that they compromised autonomy.

DAMM did not have to contend with a hostile administration. Following his victory in 1993, Antonio Bassolino declared that he would take a tolerant attitude to the *centri sociali* in contrast to the aggressive responses of administrators in other cities such as the Northern League mayor of Milan, Marco Formentini, who had ran part of his election campaign on the promise that he would evict Leoncavallo.

> "My opinion on the matter is exactly the opposite to Formentini's. Young people have the right to their spaces. If anything, the task of the council is to link them to the rest of the city." (*la Repubblica* 7/12/93)

At the beginning of the occupation in 1995, it transpired that the *palazzina* was supposed to have housed a municipal archive but, despite a protest by local intellectuals who called for the occupants to be removed (*la Repubblica* 4/10/95), this idea was abandoned after a more suitable site was found. In spite of a series of rumours during the following years that the council wanted to reclaim the *palazzina*, the location in a building that had seemingly been relinquished by authorities meant that DAMM did not have to negotiate its survival. Rather, DAMM repeatedly accused the administration of

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Maradona, presented at Venice..Never before in Italy has a *centro sociale* produced fiction." (*la Repubblica* 14/7/96).

assuming an indifferent position to the whole question of the Ventaglieri Project. The few official attempts to recuperate the park were deemed half-hearted. When Bassolino paid his only public visit to the site in August 1997 to inaugurate the hastily-fixed escalators, DAMM and some in the local press accused him of lauching his re-election campaign:

"On 8th August the mayor came to inaugurate the escalators which are only one important part of the structure, despite the fact that the contractors have left the work unfinished and no decision has been made regarding the management of the park..The relationship with the administration is inevitable but instructive, even if disagreable for its slowness and inefficiency, and aims to ensure minimum guarantees of maintenance through which to develop a free zone which, with participation, will experiment rules and practices which arise from the needs and contradictions of those who put them into action...Don't vote. Occupy the post-earthquake structures. Support and participate in the self-manangement of the Parco Ventaglieri." (leaflet, "About the self-management of the Parco Ventaglieri" September 1997)

Although DAMM invited the public to collaborate with its '*autogestione*', it nonetheless admitted that constant mediation with the administration was necessary if conditions in the park were to be improved. It was through this confrontation that DAMM elaborated wider definitions about public space in the *quartiere popolare*.

4.2. The '*doposcuola*' at DAMM (2000)

bollettino autoprodotto DAMM zone multiple autogestite

n°1 / marzo 1999

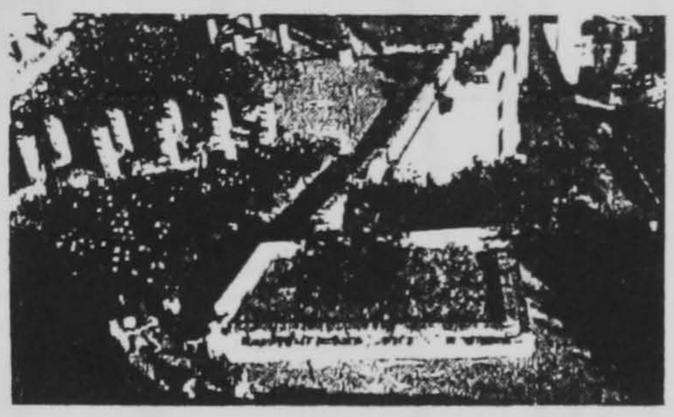
LA STRANA STORIA

Il Parco Ventaglieri è un'area complessa che comprende tra l'altro un impianto di scale mobili, una scuola e una palazzina di destinazione incerta, che è diventata il centro sociale DAMM il 25 Agosto 1995. Da quel giorno gran parte del parco, da sempre abbandonato, è stato di fatto riaperto al quartiere Montesano e alla città.

E' stato riprostinato il verde (grazie anche a un campo di lavoro del Servizio Civile Internazionale); si è consolidata una fruizione eterogenea, caratterizzata da bambini e giovani del quartiere (ma non solo), di solito estromessi da questo tipo di spazi, per il quale il DAMM costituisce l'unico riferimento nel parco e con i quali da tre anni e mezzo è in atto un faticoso percorso quotidiano per costruire insieme regole di convivenza e di rispetto vrso i luoghi e le persone; le attività quotidiane, le iniziative politiche e gli eventi spettacolari organizzati dal centro hanno fatto confluire in questo luogo migliaia di persone, attirando l'attenzione della città su di esso, promuovendone la vivibilità e una fruizione allargata oltre i confini del quartiere. In quest'opera in collettivo del DAMM ha assunto piena responsabilità per le proprie azioni, ma non ha mai inteso gestire luoghi di pertinenza comunale, peraltro abbandonati, agendo prima di tutto per garantirsi la possibilità di esistere e lavorare. Nell'agosto 1997 il sindaco Bassolino ha innaugurato la struttura delle scale mobili (in vista delle elezioni di novembre) senza che nulla fosse disposto per la gestione e manutenzione delle stesse. Questa incuria, oltre allo stato permanente di abbandono, ha portato alla chiusura dell'impianto dopo solo un anno.

La presenza costante di un collettivo di autogestione ha voluto dire che ad ogni fattore d'invivibilità, dovuto alle cause suddette, è stata opposta una reazione (e non una soluzione). Ora, come sempre in seguito a logiche misteriose, si è ridestato l'interesse dell'amministrazione per l'area dei Ventaglieri. Sono stati stanziati altri cinquecento milioni per il ripristino delle scale mobili e ulteriori misure sembrerebbero preludere ad un affidamento "politico" alla circoscrizione, delle competenze di gestione. Si profila uno scenario già visto, ancora nulla è stato stabilito sui contenuti di questa gestione. Il DAMM, con dettagliata proposta, ha chiesto di partecipare alla commissione che deciderà le regole di gestione del parco in virtù di una legittimità acquisita con la pratica nel corso del tempo. Invita inoltre le solite lobbie, associazione, propaggini dei partiti, eccetera, che hanno l'abitudine di comparire sempre un attimo prima che l'opera si compia e la faccia tosta di ascrivere a se stessi i meriti del compimento, per questa volta di astenersi da questa odiosa ma frequente pratica.

AREA SANA- AREA INSANA

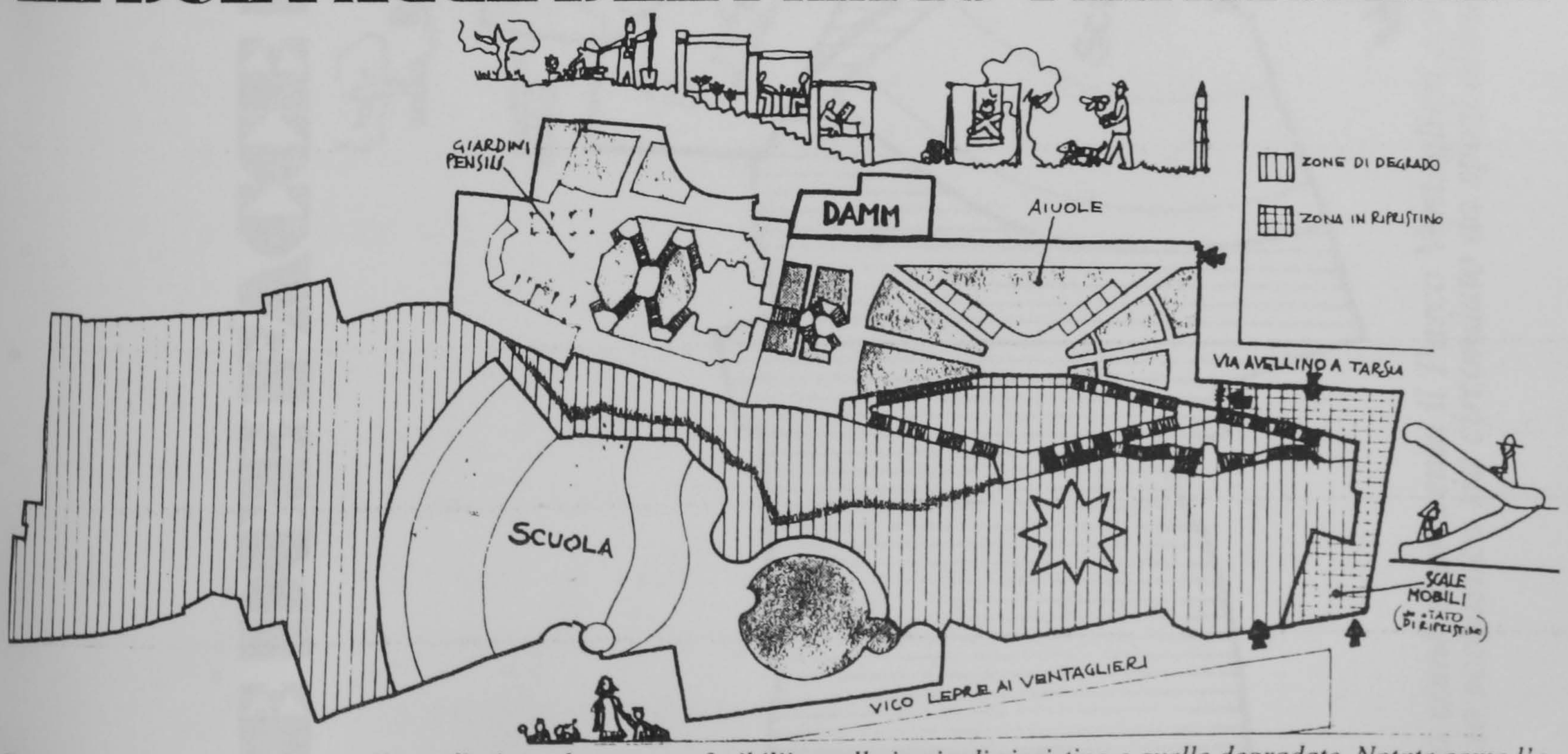


Le politiche urbane degli spazi verdi tendono ad ignorare gli usi effettivi che di questi si fanno; un cartello con i divieti all'ingresso ci induce a pensarli come luoghi di contemplazione, privi di qualsiasi funzione, buchi verdi ritagliati nella città. Recinti da strappare alle marginalità e restituire ad eventi mondani sporadici ed effimeri, senza spazi deputati alla gestione quotidiana e a servizi basilari, come ad esempio attrezzature per il gioco e lo sport. In questo scenario i giardini pubblici sono destinati a diventare vuoti e tutti uguali, ostili ad ogni forma di socializzazione spontanea . La modalità consueta è di chiuderli (vedi Villa Comunale), ignorando pratiche di coinvolgimento di chi vive attorno ad essi.

Il parco Ventaglieri rappresenta un paradosso: al suo interno convivono situazioni di degrado (dovute soprattutto alla non manutenzione della zona inferiore della struttura, al funzionamento a singhiozzo delle scale mobili, all'incuria in cui versa il giardino superiore alla scuola) e gli spazi restituiti ad una piena vivibilità (il parco superiore, i giardini pensili, la zona di pertinenza della scuola), grazie ad un faticoso percorso quotidiano costruito attraverso la collaborazione tra il DAMM, la gente del quartiere e non ultimo un gruppo di giardinieri che si sono autoassegnati la cura delle aree verdi del parco.

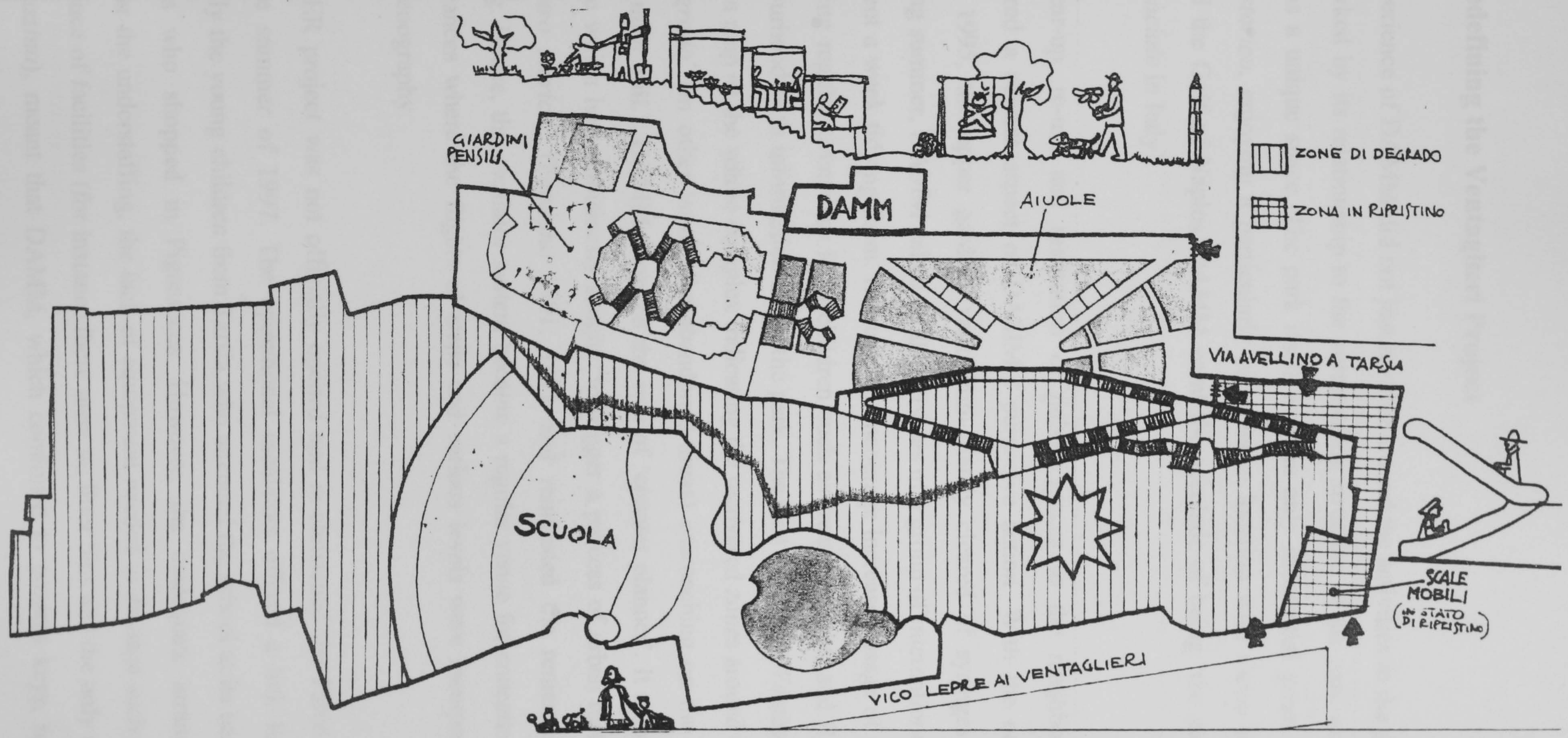
Può, quindi, diventare irresponsabile il gridare al degrado senza valutare, apertamente, che un intelligente progetto di rifunzionalizzazione di una parte del Parco è già in atto e che a questo potrebbe ispirarsi un onesto modello di recupero delle altre aree veramente degradate. Pare quindi necessario precisare, a chi oggi apprende che nel pieno centro cittadino esiste un'area verde, che in essa, da alcuni anni ormai, si sta realizzando un agire comune che attira consensi e richiede attenzione.

LE DUE FACCE DEL PARCO VENTAGLIERI



Ecco come si presenta il Parco Ventaglieri con le sue aree fruibilii, quelle in via di ripristino e quelle degradate. Notate come l'edificio scolastico sia circondato da spazi abbandonati e come invece i giardini intorno al Centro DAMM siano stati recuperati.

4.3. Front page of *il Ventagliere*, No.1 March 1999



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11.3 Redefining the Ventaglieri Project

The experience of DAMM did not just revolve around the activities in the *palazzina* but was marked by its relationship to the surrounding structure of the park and escalators. This was a unique space. The park itself was the only substantial green space in the *centro storico*, enjoying a particularly picturesque location with views over Vomero Hill and the Gulf of Naples. DAMM earnt the accolade of being 'the most beautiful *centro sociale* in Italy'.

The clear-up, re-use and restitution of public spaces to the neighbourhood was considered a central aspect of DAMM's purposive action. With the occupation in August 1995, the upper gardens were immediately cleared of syringes and in the following summer, DAMM called on the services of a group of international volunteers who spent a week tidying them. It sought to encourage increased usage of the space by organizing regular events for local children such as treasure hunts, and flyposting the neighbourhood with information about the park. The first issue of *il Ventagliere* (1999) printed a map of the whole complex indicating the recovered zones around DAMM and the '*degrado*' (in other words the abandoned areas) encroaching on the new school below [**map 4.iii.**]. DAMM assumed the role of 'counter planner'. It reappropriated a structure which had ambitiously sought "to trigger a process of urban restructuring of the *centro storico*" (Ferulano 1991: 107), and reinvested the remnants with new meaning. Hence, the escalator system became a regular venue for concerts and theatre performances where the flights of steps and various levels were incorporated into a ludic scenography.

The PSER project was not officially opened and re-christened the Parco Ventaglieri until the summer of 1997. The operational escalators offered a link for residents, especially the young children from Tarsia who attended the school at its base and older residents who shopped in Pignasecca. However, the inadequate arrangements, in particular the understaffing, the lack of equipment needed to manage such a space and the absence of facilities (for instance there were no litter bins and the only toilet was in the *palazzina*), meant that DAMM, which continued to possess keys, remained the principal, and at times only, operator.

With their daily presence and intimate knowledge of the place, DAMM occupants pressurized the council by highlighting a string of problems and proposing possible solutions. It took direct forms of action; calling on users to phone city hall to demand the council's intervention and at one point threatening to lock the top and main access to the park. It even set up a parallel organization – the *Comitato Pelé* (after the Brazilian footballer) – with the intention of opening a channel of dialogue with the administration and, in the summer of 1997, submitted a detailed, deliberately over-ambitious, scheme for the renovation and utilization of the space. This included exploiting the free floor space in the escalator structure for a children's bookshop, a theatre and a meeting place for local associations. According to the plan, the council would complete the work and provide the necessary funds for the committee to run a 'no-profit' programme of events. However, DAMM made it clear throughout that it had no intention of permanently occupying these structures:

"Most of the management proposals were not realistic. Nobody ever thought about assuming the responsibility of organizing cultural activities in the park. They were always a way of attracting the administration's attention." (Luca, interview)

At the end of 1998, DAMM convened a *comitato di quartiere* following the sudden, unforewarned closure of the escalator service and after a return of heroin addicts to the park. Up to fifty mainly middle-class local residents met regularly in the park for almost a year to discuss the situation and to draw up a list of recommendations which were presented to the district council. DAMM activists found themselves at odds with many of the participants' views as it became clear that they were primarily concerned about the escalator service and less interested in the park as a public place. Some were more concerned about unruly children playing on the escalators than the council's absence. But as a result of its stronger organizational position, DAMM claimed that it was able to steer the debate away from questions of surveillance and security and on to more concrete proposals regarding the space's management.

"The committee was composed of the neighbourhood's elites: university professors, doctors, artists, an ex-assessor of the Bassolino administration...Sometimes a few women from the surrounding houses would approach only to immediately retreat...With the opening of the escalators, as sudden and as mysterious as their closure, the committee disbanded as the social reasons for its existence disappeared." (DAMM 2000)

Activists were nevertheless aware of DAMM's limited influence on the administration. After 1998, occupants participated in the local district council's special commission on the park, and although the *circoscrizione* came to accept the mediating role of DAMM. this local public assembly was considered ineffective given its restricted powers and lack of expertise.

"They know we're the only ones who make serious proposals. They listen to us but they have no specializations. They've always proposed banal things – like flowers – but you can't maintain an intransigent position and deride them all the time." (Luca, interview)[23]

Through its campaigns to improve the park, DAMM questioned the city's organization under the Bassolino administration and the implications of regenerational politics. At the heart of the conflict were divergent definitions of Parco Ventaglieri as a public space. From 1993, the local government stressed the importance of providing recreational areas in a city which had the lowest amount of green space per inhabitant in Italy. But while plans were made to liberate large tracts of land on the city's outskirts, the more prestigious parks like the Villa Comunale were restored and, significantly, other PSER public projects were opened, the administration did not commit itself to the management of a green space in a central neighbourhood. Instead of responding to the more mundane needs of the park such as structural repairs to walls and stairways, the administration's sporadic interest in the park tended to focus on its peculiar properties and how these could be applied to a more general strategy of urban renewal. The escalator system, in particular, was considered a unique innovation in the city. At its inauguration, Bassolino declared to the press:

"This is another stage in the revival of the neighbourhoods which require maximum attention. This escalator system may represent a model to pursue for a hilly city ." (*Il Mattino* 8/8/97)

Indeed, a month after Bassolino's visit, a proposal was announced by Antonio Amato, assessor for 'Urban Maintenance', for another escalator link between Parco Ventaglieri

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[23]The only event organized by the local council in the park was a summer concert in 1998 in the concrete esplanade at the bottom of the park (in other words the area not used by DAMM). The district council also became increasingly frustrated at the lack of response from city hall. Its DS president, Elisabetta Gambardella, complained in interview with a local newspaper: "There's the Parco Ventaglieri which is a 'green lung' of fundamental importance for the neighbourhood. Only if they give me some money to cover the costs and guarantee me a team of gardeners, will the *Circoscrizione* accept to manage the space. Tell this to the mayor." (*Corriere del Mezzogiorno* 21/3/99).

and the lower end of Vomero and Parco Viviani[24]. According to Amato, the 2½ billion lire plan would give residents of the (more affluent) districts above the *centro storico* quick access to the public transport terminals in Montesanto (*Corriere del Mezzogiorno* 1/10/97). But as with numerous other ambitious projects, this particularly extravagant plan was almost immediately shelved. According to DAMM, it confirmed that the administration was evading its responsabilities for the management of the Parco Ventaglieri:

"This arrogant and ridiculous declaration confirmed to those who still harboured doubts or hopes, that the *Comune* was washing its hands of the affair." (DAMM 2000)

In an article in *Corriere del Mezzogiorno*, the urbanist Daniela Lepore, one of DAMM's 'allies', saw the project as a symptom of an overambitious and unrealistic approach to the city's urban problems:

"The design of a new elaborate link between two malfunctioning parks really seems a "solution in search of a problem". I would modestly suggest, although I fear in vain, other ways. For example try to understand why projects full of good intentions end up as disasters; experiment with more realistic organizational and formal measures; involve people in projects such as the guys from DAMM, the association of the Parco Viviani, neighbourhood groups, potential users. Perhaps this idea of green space is more banal and less ambitious but on the other hand the public might be able to undersand it better and therefore love and look after it."(*Corriere del Mezzogiorno* 9/10/97)

Ultimately, the space's location in a *quartiere popolare* meant that it remained a low priority. In Rosa Russo Jervolino' 2001 election manifesto, Parco Ventaglieri was listed as one of the "green lungs" opened under the Bassolino administrations, but the only information provided was its size: 8,000 square metres (Napoli con Jervolino 2001: 19). As a functional space constructed after the earthquake, it simply did not possess the symbolic import of a monumental piazza or, for that matter, a historic space such as the grounds of Ospedale Militare in the Spanish Quarters (described as one of the "rediscovered gardens..[which had] provided Naples with new salubrious spots" (ibid.: 14)), to warrant closer attention[25]. In stark contrast, the restoration in 1999 of the Villa Comunale, the park laid out by the Bourbons in the eighteenth century along the coast

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[24] Parco Viviani, opened at the beginning of 1994, is located close to DAMM but on the other side of Corso Vittorio Emanuele, the boundary which marks the end of the *quartieri popolari*.

[25] Formal hierarchies have existed in British cities where green spaces have been classified by local authorities and planners in terms of size (from 'metropolitan' to 'small local') and according to qualitative attributes (Greenhalgh and Worpole 1995: 21).

in Chiaia, was a daily focus of attention for the media and the administration. Public opinion was divided over the postmodern design of the new fencing and multicoloured chalets. The height of the controversy came with the discovery that one of the chalets blocked the Villa Pignatelli's historic view of the island of Capri, at which point Bassolino personally intervened to order its removal. For DAMM activists, Villa Comunale represented the opposite end of the spectrum:

"Let's zoom onto another place, the Parco Ventaglieri located in the heart of the city and defined as a "neighbourhood space" or in other words of little interest to the city. The reason for this definition is mysterious; logically it could refer to the fact that it is only used by residents of surrounding neighbourhoods and therefore only interesting to a minority. In Naples "Take the children to the Villa Comunale" is a family proverb and since the family is the fundamental nucleus in this extremely catholic country so the Villa of Via Carracciolo becomes the place of majority interest and therefore susceptible to scandals and controversies which attract people's attention, especially in the lead-up to an election campaign...The truth of the matter is that the entire structure [of the Parco Ventaglieri] was built with horrid speculations and with shoddy and unsuitable materials which the present administration wants to forget and whose motto is "it's not my responsibility."" (Braucci 1999b)

The public debates over the Villa Comunale centred on issues of aesthetic taste rather than on the social implications of the new design. Neither the supporters nor the opponents of the proposed transformation questioned the principle of enclosing the space (which was required to formally turn it into a park). The unfenced edges of the Villa Comunale, apart from allowing permanent access, had previously been a meeting place for Sri Lankan and Philipino immigrants who attended a Catholic service in a nearby church. According to DAMM, this propensity to 'enclosure' led to the supression of 'open' space.

"Public gardens are destined to become empty and all the same, hostile to every type of spontaneous socialization. The usual method is to close them (as in the case of the Villa Comunale) ignoring the uses of those who live around them." (*Il Ventgliere* No.1 March 1999)

The Parco Ventaglieri was not simply conceived by DAMM as a material space in need of improvements but a site which was contested between different publics and their overlapping uses and meanings of public space. The official definition of the 'park' as an enclosed place with fixed sets of rules was therefore considered anomalous. Moreover, activists pointed out that the Ventaglieri Project had not been planned as a 'park' but as a link between two streets and it was on these grounds that they

successfully campaigned to extend the opening hours of the escalators to comply with people's spatial routines in the neighbourhood. The occupation promoted multiple and often discordant uses of the Parco Ventaglieri. The 'participation' of certain users did not always reflect the intentions of activists. For instance, theatrical performances in the *palazzina*, attended by mainly non-local users, were sometimes interrupted by the incursions of children from the park. In order to negotiate their daily presence in the *quartiere popolare*, DAMM had to endure continual problems: regular theft, damage to the structure and equipment, insults and derision, as well as complaints from neighbours over levels of noise during open-air events.

"We ask ourselves when the thefts will end but they'll never stop. Before we were a lot more anxious. We couldn't sleep. Everyday something would happen..Now we've calmed down a bit. But it depends on the period. D'Agostino [local teenager] for instance seems a lot more respectful." (Luca, interview).

The modus vivendi of DAMM was to try to critically accommodate social and cultural differences. The endemic problem of poverty, considered specific to Naples and the south, was not regarded a tinderbox for political struggles (as it may have been by Officina 99 or lo Ska) but as the impetus to engage with individuals.

"An experience like DAMM could be repeated in Messina or Palermo; where there's poverty – that's makes the difference. It's true that they buy these big cars and stereos but they remain economically and culturally poor. We don't delude ourselves that things will change but we know that this experience will have a significant impact on one out of ten people." (Maurizio, interview)[26]

However, due to the more affluent social background of some occupants and the knowledge acquired through university education of many others, the (desired) attempts at establishing equal-based, interactive relationships with local residents, especially the 'rowdy' teenagers, were inevitably limited. Most at DAMM were nevertheless aware of the various symbolic and material barriers between themselves and the park's local users (as well as within the group of occupants itself) and it was for this reason that it claimed to adopt a pragmatic, rather than a politically idealistic, attitude towards the occupation.

By campaigning over public space, DAMM at the same time confronted negative

representations of local users and neighbourhood inhabitants. When one of DAMM's activists had first tried to muster interest for the occupation, the idea of occupying in the neighbourhood did not carry much appeal:

> "I spoke to a lot of people. I had a meeting with the anarchists at the Luis Michel Circle near the Montesanto Underground station. They said "No it isn't possible. You can't occupy that space." So I replied "I don't want to create a *centro sociale* closed on itself but open to the neighbourhood." "No way! Not the neighbourhood! It's full of shit people!" I remember various comments: "By the underground they used to spit in my face!" "At Tien'A'Ment [a 'libertarian-punk' *centro sociale* in Soccavo closed by police in 1996] we'd go from house to house in shirt and tie but it was no use because the people were shits!" (Maurizio, interview)

DAMM reserved the greatest animosity for a cultural and political ruling elite (often generally defined as the 'bourgeoisie') which it accused of trying to impose a singular vision of the city and deny difference. According to one activist, the common association of the *quartiere popolare* with *degrado* meant that the Ventaglieri Park was a priori labelled as a dangerous place (Luca, interview). DAMM's publications and leaflets were scathing of those parents who prevented their children from using the park, in particular the participants of the *comitato di quartiere* which had convened over the escalator service:

> "Only three of the families responded to our request by taking their children to the park. With the end of their parents' brief season of activism, the other children lost the last opportunity to use this strange place which they had learnt to fear." (DAMM 2000)

The Parco Ventaglieri was rarely the subject of public debates about urban decorum. Its marginal location reduced the level of media interest. On one rare occasion at the end of September 1997, the local press complained that the recently inaugurated escalators had become the favourite loitering place for gangs of local children and that the council had done nothing to deter its aberrant misuse (*Corriere del Mezzogiorno* 27/9/97). A few days later an editorial by left wing intellectual, Massimo Galluppi, entitled "The problem of a new civic consciousness. The Ventagliere escalators", appeared on the front page of *Corriere del Mezzogiorno*. Galluppi used the case to reflect on what he considered the city's deep-rooted backwardness as well as to question the achievements of the Bassolino administration:

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[26] For instance, after DAMM and an occupied centre in Berlin organized an exchange between groups of teenagers from Montesanto and the Berlin suburb of Kreuzberg in 2000 (with the aid of a EU youth project grant), one of the Neapolitan participants decided to move to Germany in search of work.

"The 'new' Naples has not been able to assimilate the idea that besides public efficiency, individual discipline is necessary if we want to change the face of the city. From this point of view the episode of the escalators in Via Ventaglieri is the metaphor of a common destiny. In a city which has not recognized the bourgeois revolution – and which has never possessed a bourgeois class worthy of this name – the superficial hedonism [here Galluppi is referring to the administration's promotion of leisure events such as those organized in Piazza Plebiscito] constitutes an obstacle to the formation of a modern civic consciousness which needs to be created if one accepts the idea that the use of force is necessary but not sufficient to bring the terrible children of Montesanto to reason. It is a long and difficult job which somebody sooner or later will have to do. Who and how, for the moment, nobody knows." (*Corriere del Mezzogiorno* 1/10/97)

As Galluppi claimed that nobody was attempting to bring these children to "reason", it was perhaps fitting that he made no reference to DAMM. According to DAMM, the ludic appropriation of the escalators was considered a means of making sense of an 'alien' structure in the neighbourhood (DAMM 1998). Through its everyday experience with children, DAMM played on the administration's words of commitment to young Neapolitans. Shortly prior to election in 1993, Bassolino had declared that he would personally overlook a 'Children of Europe Project' which would aim to "take [children] off the streets, send them to school and fill their free time with sports and cultural activities" (*il Mattino* 3/12/93). This idea of 'right' and 'wrong' places was turned on its head:

"They declare that their objective is to remove children from the streets. For the moment they remove the street with controls and automobiles, tourists and flower boxes, walls and gates, police and *vigili urbani*..But everyday in the city children reconquer terrain. They need spaces and want to decide alone how to use those assigned, prepared and fenced off by planners." (leaflet "Children at risk don't exist", Spring 1999)

Thus, while the Bassolinian idea of Naples as "the city of children" was constantly ridiculed (DAMM 1998; 2000), children were seen to unconsciously manipulate and redefine public space through their daily relationship with the built environment. Indeed, their appropriations of urban space potentially held the most politically potent commentaries on the organization of the city. One can sense in the position of DAMM (or at least those involved with the *doposcuola*), the influence of the British urbanist and anarchist Colin Ward, who gave a lecture at the Mensa dei Bambini Proletari in 1997 and whose book *The Child in the City* (1978) was translated into Italian by a DAMM activist in 1999. Ward sees the child's use of space as the only true international culture but one which is continually ignored, excluded and regulated. Despite restraints

imposed by planners and local authorities, children will nevertheless continue to adapt their urban environment:

"A city that is really concerned with the needs of its young will make the whole environment accessible to them, because whether invited to or not, they are going to use the whole environment." (Ward 1977, p.73)

The experience of DAMM in Montesanto represents an attempt at the self-organized planning and alternative development and use of urban space. As such, it sharply contrasted to the daily forms of informal negotiation and resistance, variously labelled under the maxim "*arrangiarsi*", which were considered typical of the *quartieri popolari*. The occupation, without a doubt, had a positive impact on the abandoned post-earthquake project. It must be remembered that until August 1995, the structure did not exist as a public space. DAMM's constructive presence attracted an array of users who would otherwise have never visited the site:

"A heterogenous use has been consolidated, characterized by young people and children from the neighbourhood who are usually expelled from this type of space. DAMM constitutes their only reference in the park and over the last three and half years, have together pursued an exhausting daily course to establish rules of *convivenza* [mutual tolerance and coexistence] and respect towards places and other people. The daily activites, the political initiatives and the cultural events organized by the centre have also drawn thousands of people to this place, attracting the city's attention and encouraging its use by people from outside the neighbourhood." (leaflet, Spring 1999)

DAMM sought to promote a pluralistic vision of public space which (critically) celebrated the social and cultural diversity of the city. For instance, it purposely organized joint concerts of alternative rock groups and the '*neo-melodici*'[27] to cater for the divergent tastes of locals and outside users. It has recently established contact with immigrant groups in the area. During 2001 it provided lodging to two Cape Verdeans from Montesanto who had been evicted from their homes, and during the summer organized a party in the park with the local Cape Verdean community and immigrant organizations. Through its involvement with school children, DAMM encouraged activities in the park – such as treasure hunts and the designing of murals – which were

[27] The *neo-melodici* are singers from the city's *quartieri popolari* and working-class suburbs who rework the themes of traditional Neapolitan songs. The lyrics are almost exclusively in Neapolitan and their immense popularity is confined to Naples and its hinterland (there are three private telvesion channels which are solely dedicated to showing their videos).

not possible in the street, were either discouraged or deemed irrelevant at school and were banned from other open spaces such as the restored Villa Comunale. At the same time, by engaging with 'difficult' users (in particular the aggressive male teenagers) and pursuing 'sustainable' forms of conflict, DAMM confronted the representations of certain inhabitants as '*scugnizzi*' or "subproletarian lowbrows" (as they were described by the Provincial President Amato Lamberti), and defended errant forms of behaviour which the administration was trying to reform. In its own words, the presence of DAMM opposed the "normalization" of the city under the Bassolino administrations (DAMM 1998; 2000).

DAMM had many limits and shortcomings. While it encouraged mixed uses of the Parco Ventaglieri and formed ongoing relationships with children and young people, activists acknowledged that they lacked the active support of many other locals, especially adults, who preferred to avoid the park. The formulation and sustainment of a collective urban project in a *quartiere popolare* was fraught with difficulties. The area's social contradictions prevented the elaboration of far-reaching political and social agendas, while numerous events and some of the language (such as the often obsessive anti-'bourgeoisie' rhetoric) targetted a different (non-local) audience. Furthermore, the possibilities for projecting itself into a wider public sphere were restricted. Forms of activity were episodic, under-funded, and at times weakened by ambivalent attitudes to 'allies' and distrust towards other political and social organizations in the city. In addition, DAMM admitted that the administration was mainly indifferent to its campaigns to improve the park (although this reflected as much the peripheral position of the structure as a weakness on the part of DAMM).

However, it would be futile to assess the *centro sociale* in terms of 'success'. DAMM was not born with the aim of directly challenging the urban politics of Bassolino. This emerged out of its pratical experience of managing various abandoned spaces. Moreover, it did not consider itself a force specifically geared to pressing for urban change, but as an experimental space promoting '*convivenza*' (coexistence) at a micro-level. Perhaps DAMM's most important achievement, over and above its campaigns and political struggles, was to invest an abandoned space with collective meaning. As one activist asserted: "since we've been here people call the park 'DAMM' or 'the *centro*'" (Luca, interview). The occupation contributed to the radical tradition of the

area, and at the same time offered a new "repertoire of contention" (Ruggiero 2000: 181):

"Politics is not something confined to Palazzo San Giacomo [the city hall]. It's here in the alleyway in front of DAMM, it's your relation with your surroundings..What do I care about assessors and the mayor? In two years time nobody will remember them..Perhaps in five years time somebody in Messina will want to start up a *centro sociale*. The existence of a historical example of struggle like DAMM may help them." (Maurizio)

Ultimately, as the Parco Ventaglieri's principal 'representative', DAMM confronted the marginal role assigned to the *quartieri popolari* under the process of urban regeneration. It managed to construct a degree of political consensus among users as well as the local press by expoiting the paradoxical absence of an administration which had prioritized the provision of parks and the resurrection of the *centro storico*. In contrast to the administration's crude statistical vision of green space and pragmatic approach to urban renewal in the *quartieri*, DAMM experimented and promoted a "more specialist, needs-based approach" (Greenhalgh and Worpole 1995: 21). In terms of concrete and lasting achievements, DAMM may not have made a difference to the life of Montesanto, let alone the city as a whole, but it was significant as a model for an alternative vision of the city and as a form of political action which was explicitly conceived through the re-use of urban space. The fact that DAMM's demands for mundane repairs to the Parco Ventaglieri were often ignored reflected the priorities of the administration's regenerational agenda and at the same time underlined the limited scope of 'citizen participation' in building a new, more 'inclusive' city.

Conclusion

This research project has examined the pivotal role of the *centro storico* in the reimaging of Naples during the 1990s. It has analysed how the Bassolino administrations harnessed the city's heritage and central public spaces with the view to encouraging tourism, attracting inward investment and fostering among Neapolitans a sense of civic pride and a greater participation in urban life. One of its central aims has been to explore the question of urban regeneration in the specific and problematic context of Naples; a city of deep social and economic divisions which has held a peripheral position in modern Europe. This has meant on the one hand examining the the role of the *centro storico* in urban debates in a historical perspective and, on the other, analysing how urban agendas in the 1990s arose as a result of political and economic conjunctures; such as those provoked by the direct election of mayors after 1993 and the search for alternative forms of economic development to state funding.

With the election of a new centre-left mayor in May 2001, the former Christian Democrat Rosa Russo Iervolino, it is possible to make a provisional assesment of the achievements of Bassolino era. There is a general consensus of opinion (even among the most obdurate of right wingers) that the internal and external image of the city dramatically improved during the 1990s. While most have abandoned the initial euphoric idea of the 'Neapolitan Renaissance', political observers, the mainstream media and the polls agree that the Bassolino administrations represented a turning point in the city's fortunes. At a national level, Bassolino was considered the principal success story among the new mayors (Vandelli 1997; Cappelli 1998). The reform of 1993 signalled the beginning of effective governance after years of political inertia. Some argue that as the city had reached the lowest ebb in its history during the early 1990s things could not have got much worse, but that Bassolino proved very capable in steering Naples out of crisis (Geremicca 1997). The city's immense debts were trimmed, its overspending habits curtailed, while the investment of council bonds on the New York stock exchange released money which went towards improving the city's public transport system. By reasserting the principle of legality in everyday life, a greater sense of order was established and the central streets were more manageable both for pedestrians and vehicles. Indeed, a common cliché has emerged that many drivers now *do* stop at red lights. The administration's commitment to protecting and rehabilitating the *centro storico* not only represented a victory for the cultural

associations which had campaigned against its demolition during the 1980s, but also provided an important boost for the city's moribund tourist industry. After tourist levels reached an all-time low in 1993, there was a marked increase in the number Italian and foreign visitors to the city, especially in the wake of the G7 summit and following the recent establishment of cheap direct flights to major European capitals. On the back of its improved image and after the restructuring of the port, the city also reinstated itself on the Mediterranean cruise circuit. In 1995 there were 610,000 registered arrivals in the city, the highest number in ten years, and 1,290,000 presences, the largest amount since 1991 (V. Amato 1996: 18)[1]. Most people, however, only stay a few days and their presence is concentrated in certain periods and to specific parts of the city. Furthermore, the city has barely rivalled the more popular destinations in the province of Naples such as the seaside resorts of Sorrento, Capri and Ischia, while the archaeological sites of Pompei and Herculaneum have far outnumbered the museums of Naples in terms of visitors (Solima 1999: 91).

Urban regeneration had its clear limits. Naples remains one of Western Europe's poorest cities. Although Bassolino was very successful in initiating a perception of change, his urban strategies did not have a great socio-economic impact on the city as a whole. Despite climbing up the national quality of life league tables after the G7 summit and receiving a top A1 grade from the credit rating agency Moody's in November 1995[2], Naples continued to be afflicted by unemployment, social exclusion, crime, inadequate housing as well as a precarious subsoil weakened by years of excessive building. A disaster in the northern suburb of Secondigliano in January 1996, where the sudden collapse of a street led to eleven deaths, highlighted the fact that the reimaging and restructuring process had only benefited parts of the city. Bassolino was himself well aware of the limits of the local administration, and insisted that structural improvements required a new systematic approach on the part of the national government to economic development in the South (Bassolino 1996b). It must be said that it is too early to evaluate the full impact of the administration's urban strategies. The re-evaluation of the *centro storico* during the 1990s was in many ways the groundwork to fundamental long-term change. while the consequences of less palpable

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[1] This resurgence barely compares with the levels of the 1960s and 1970s. In the peak year of 1964 there were 1.1 million arrivals and 2.7 million presences. Even in 1981, the year after the earthquake, the city recorded over 1.8 million presences (V. Amato 1996).

[2] This rating, at the time higher than those of New York and Boston, was awarded largely on account of the taxation and accounts restructuring policy adopted by the Bassolino administration (Pasotti 2001: 13).

achievements such as the planned redevelopment of the steelworks in Bagnoli and the eastern industrial district will not fully emerge for at least another decade.

This study has provided a different perspective on urban regeneration by examining its impact on three urban spaces in the *centro storico*. Each study provided diverse and extensive insights into the links between urban history, regeneration and the experience of public space. It is possible to draw out some general themes. To conclude, I want to look at three common issues: firstly, the shifting role of places within urban narratives; secondly, the tensions surrounding Bassolino's concept of a socially inclusive city; and thirdly, the question of contested space.

Each site possessed a series of representations and functions which had sedimented over time. Significantly, all three spaces were peripheral to urban debates before 1993. Piazza Plebiscito had been a car park and an important road link. Piazza Garibaldi, the hub of the city's public transport and a major road junction, was rarely a cause for public concern. Before the occupation of DAMM in 1995, the Ventaglieri Project languished in a state of abandonment. Apart from a few art historical and tourist accounts of Piazza Plebiscito, there was very little detailed material about the history of the three places. This meant conducting a sort of 'archaeological dig' to retrace 'buried' representations. By analysing newpaper and journal reports from the 1950s through to the early 1990s, it was possible to examine the public responses to the establishment of the car park in Piazza Plebiscito, the debates over the new station and transformation of Piazza Garibaldi, and, to a lesser extent, the reactions to the crumbling state of the Ventaglieri district of Montesanto. During the 1990s, new narratives about place involved redefining the role of urban space or reviving former 'layers' of meaning (for instance Piazza Garibaldi as the gateway to the *centro storico*) and enclosing negative aspects or erasing legacies of the past, as in the case of the car-park period in Piazza Plebiscito which was reread as a thirty year void. The G7 summit represented a key turning point for Piazza Plebiscito and Piazza Garibaldi, not only for the physical changes that it brought about (which were actually limited in the case of the station piazza) but by the way it shifted public attitudes about each space. However, urban functions and representations are closely bound with the form of a space and its relationship to the city and therefore tend to persist over time. Helen Vos (1993) has examined how the historical rituals of leisure (festivals and organized sports) and death

(cemetries and abattoirs) have intermittently resurfaced since Roman times around the Testaccio hill in Rome, a place which had always held a liminal position in relation to the city. In a similar way, the huge arena of Piazza Plebiscito had historically been a space of organized events but also a place of political protest. The colonnade has continually served as a *pissoir* and dormitory over the last two centuries as well as being the most populated side of the piazza. During a visit to the city in 1850, the writer Ferdinand Gregovius noted the groups of idle '*lazzari*' lolling over the steps in the full view of the Royal police (Ramondino and Müller 1992: 50). Over 150 years later, a local journalist complained about the gangs from the Spanish Quarters (which presumably included Salvatore the *granita* seller) in the same area who disturbed the "high-class *movida*" and tranquility of Piazza Plebiscito (*la Repubblica* 7/8/01). The gap between emergent narratives about place and uninterrupted routines and rituals was also very apparent in the study of Piazza Garibaldi. Indeed, long before the arrival of immigrants during the 1980s, the station area had been the centre of the informal economy and a place where strangers mingled. Within a much shorter span of time and in a specifically political context, DAMM's occupation and campaigns over public space recalled the history of struggles over urban issues in the immediate surrounding area.

Each study examined the practical implications of political discourses about public space. Piazza Plebiscito and Piazza Garibaldi represented two conflicting visions: a desire for social interaction in the former and a commitment to safety and order in the latter. Both involved the drawing up of boundaries around appropriate behaviour and definitions about an acceptable public. In the case of DAMM, the boundaries surrounding the Parco Ventaglieri were far more flexible (or, to employ Sibley's terminology, weakly framed and classified) which reflected activists' attempts to self-manage a space in accordance with its users, but also underlined the marginal position of the *quartieri* within representations of the *centro storico*. In the light of the three spaces, Bassolino's rhetorical pronouncements about the 'return' of the city to its citizens appeared more exclusive than inclusive. The dominant idea of the *centro storico* as the site of cultural heritage, a source of civic pride and the city's principal tourist attraction tended to privilege certain groups. This not only directly appealed to tourist operators and heritage groups. but also to those people who possessed certain levels of cultural knowledge and who lived and acted within formal legal limits. There

was definitely a revanchist element to discussions about urban change which spoke of the 'rediscovery' of the *centro storico*, the 'reclamation' of public space and the 'recuperation' of local identity. In her extensive research into voters' views on the Bassolino administration, Savino (1998) discovered that civic pride was most felt among the higher-educated, affluent inhabitants of the middle-class districts such as Vomero (in other words outside the *centro storico*) rather than in the central neighbourhoods and working-class suburbs where support for the mayor was actually greater. However, it would be too simplistic to describe the reimaging of Naples a 'bourgeois' urban vision (Robins 1991). Some of the Bassolino's most vociferous opponents were shopkeepers (around Piazza Plebiscito) and small hoteliers (around Piazza Garibaldi) whose immediate interests stood in opposition or were not met by the administration's urban policies. Moreover, the vitality of 'popular' Naples was, in its right manifestations, considered one of the *centro storico's* unique assets. Certainly, many organized events were aimed at a narrow public such as jazz concerts in the Ospedale Militare park in the Spanish Quarters and avant-garde theatrical performances in piazzas and restored monuments, but regular large events such as pop concerts were targetted at a much wider audience. Rather, urban renewal was articulated in terms of a renewed citizenship based around ideal Neapolitans. Therefore, immigrants, as non-citizens, had few possibilities of participating in debates about Piazza Garibaldi and were often considered the cause of feelings of insecurity, while some Neapolitans (such as the *scugnizzi* in Piazza Plebiscito and the indecorous residents of the *quartieri popolari*) were marginalized from promoted notions of collective identity.

Although certain groups and forms of behaviour were excluded from discourses about a 'new' Naples, they were nevertheless very present in public space. Through observational work and interviews aimed at opening up 'other voices', the empirical studies examined how each site was subject to moments of conflict, daily minor infractions, unintended uses and alternative ideas about public space. Meanings about place were internalized and manipulated and spatial boundaries redrawn. Thus, conflicting ideas about Piazza Garibaldi not only existed between hoteliers and immigrants but between groups of immigrants who possessed different relationships with the station area. The extent to which certain activities and practices became a source of conflict depended on the position of spaces within urban debates. Therefore, while the incursions of *motorini* in Piazza Plebiscito sometimes led to public outcry, the

races and wheelie competitions in the alleyways of the *quartieri* would go by unnoticed. Similarly, the congregation of immigrants in Piazza Garibaldi was considered a constant problem, unlike, for instance, the noisy groups of Cape Verdeans who would meet daily in Piazza Montesanto to drink beer. Moreover, certain groups and places were subject to greater controls during the 1990s, especially immigrants in Piazza Garibaldi and those involved in informal economic activities. However the eradication of disorder only occurred under extraordinary circumstances – in other words when Naples was transformed into a 'fortress city' for the G7 summit – but such levels of control could not be maintained on a daily basis[3]. Genuine public space can never be a closed realm. Rather, it is the site where alternative ideas about the city are incubated and where people struggle to claim their place in the city, not as generic 'citizens' but as individuals and groups with different needs and desires.

Through this research, I have sought to demonstrate the highly complex nature of urban change in Naples during the 1990s. When critics use the piazza as an urban ideal (Berman 1986; Carr 1990; Isnenghi 1994) or extoll the richness of public life in Italian cities, they need to ponder on the multiple conflicts around space that this study has brought to light. The reshaping of the urban landscape has played a crucial role in the politics of urban renewal across the Western World, but this process is not as smooth as it is often portrayed (Hubbard 1996). Studies of cities and regeneration should not, as Kevin Robins has insisted, focus exclusively on how dominant ideas about urban spaces "preclude other functions and activities and..exclude those without the appropriate entry visa, the urban poor and other 'deviants'" (Robins 1991: 322), but analyse how plans and policies are lived and experienced at the level of the street and the piazza. The real

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[3] Since the disastrous and tragic events of the G8 summit in Genova in July 2001 during which a demonstrator was killed by police, the idea of sealing off monumental parts of city centres as symbolic stages for the meetings of world leaders and international capitalists, has become an increasingly unfeasible option and offers few benefits to the cities involved. In fact, the NATO summit in Naples at the end of September 2001 was moved by the Berlusconi government to the Italian Air Force headquarters in nearby Pozzuoli under pressure from Naples's mayor Rosa Russo Iervolino who refused to close off the *centro storico*.

history lies at the interface between uban projects and their contestation or negotiation in everyday circumstances.

Appendix

1. Piazza Plebiscito

The fieldwork in Piazza Plebiscito consisted of mapped observations extended over a thirteen-month period (37 sessions from October 1998 to November 1999) and 32 in-depth and short interviews with promoters and opponents of the new piazza and local and non-local users of the space. The two methods were interlinked: by systematically observing the piazza I was able to identify possible informants and devise suitable questions, while through the interviews it was possible to query assumptions made during observation. Practical issues regarding fieldwork in Naples were explored during the joint urban anthropology-town planning seminars organized by Amalia Signorelli and Costanza Caniglia in the Sociology Department, Naples University from January to May 1999. I have also drawn on Signorelli's own research, particularly her study of residents' representations of the *centro storico* of the nearby town of Pozzuoli (Signorelli 1996).

Observation in piazza

The periods of observation were recorded on maps which documented the piazza's physical condition and activities. Sessions lasted usually between twenty minutes and one hour (on one occasion a whole day was spent in the piazza), and took place at different times of the day and on different days of the week. The map as a method of documentation was particularly suited to Piazza Plebiscito because the whole space was viewable from a single point. On each map, note was made of my position. This was often on the steps running round the colonnade as this presented a convenient sort of auditorium from which to observe proceedings and because I would usually cross the piazza from Piazza Trieste and Trento. This was also the side of the piazza where most activity took place.

This fieldwork drew on and developed the observational method used by William H. Whyte in his analysis of the functionality of small public squares in central New York (Whyte 1980; 1996). The strength of Whyte's approach lies with its simplicity and clarity, as he underlines:

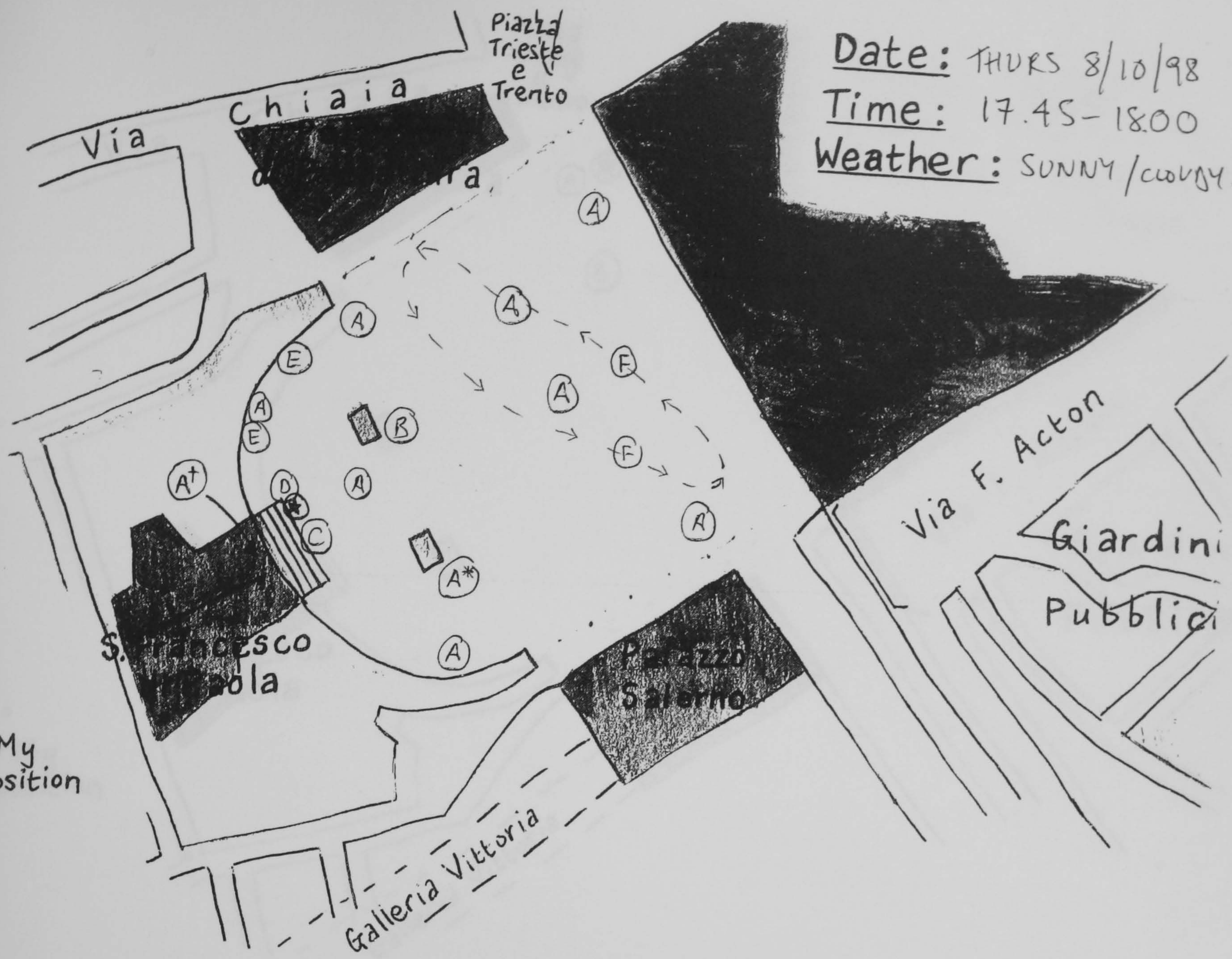
"We made periodic circuits of the plazas and noted on siting maps where people were sitting, their gender, and whether they were alone or with others..We also interviewed people and found where they worked, how frequently they used the plaza, and what they thought of it. But mostly we watched what they did." (Whyte 1996: 110)

Whyte's work raises a lot of significant issues such as the significance of gender differences (he concludes that a high proportion of women is probably a sign of a good and well-managed plaza) and the importance of size, weather conditions and sitting space (ibid.: 112-13). His conclusion, for instance, that people are attracted to well-defined places, such as steps, and rarely choose the middle of large spaces is clearly reflected in the case of Piazza Plebiscito. However, while Whyte used observational analysis in a positivistic way to offer proposals for improving the design of urban space, my aim was to simply observe behaviour and uses, and in doing so open up representations of the piazza.

The results were also confronted with Hass-Klau et al.'s recent extensive research into pedestrian behaviour in city centres in Western Europe (Hass-Klau et al 1999) which includes three studies of Italian cities (although these were all small cities located in the far north: Como, Vicenza and Saronno). This research concentrated on commercial areas of cities and its main aim was to investigate the criteria required to re-create livable streets and squares without cars (ibid: 9). As with Whyte, the approach is rather simplistic and does not attempt to situate the analysed cities within local political and social discourses about public space. Nevertheless, the authors critique the traditional focus on urban design and underline how people's relationships with urban spaces are also strongly influenced by the geographical and historical identity of place (ibid.: 25-31). Some of their general findings are mentioned in chapter 3. Their conclusions on pedestrianization are worth briefly comparing. Firstly, the authors claim that pedestrianization schemes increase the number of pedestrians, although this would sometimes take up to 12 months and would nearly always meet with the opposition of shopkeepers (ibid.: 113). Apart from the latter point, this was certainly not the case with Piazza Plebiscito. Indeed, numerous local and non-local users claimed that the piazza was much livelier before the G7 summit. However. Hass-Klau et al. add that if shops are boring and the urban environment is unattractive. pedestrianization schemes are unlikely to be very successful. The presence of shops is usually a central element to an authority's decision to pedestrianize a street or piazza, and although official plans

existed to set up appropriate activities by the colonnade, the absence of such attractions in Piazza Plebiscito certainly limited the number of pedestrians. Another problem is the piazza's size and location. The authors argue that squares which are too small are not able to accommodate a wide range of different social activities, but over-sized squares may be less intimate (ibid.: 124). Large squares sometimes might be divided into quiet and lively sides, while those located away from busy pedestrian routes are isolated and may be used by "undesirables" (ibid.). Piazza Plebiscito often appeared to be split between a relatively populated colonnade, a more deserted centre and the pedestrian route in front and the Royal Palace. It would be impossible to deduce from my observation whether any of its users were 'undesirable'. Hass-Klau et al.'s unproblematic use of this term (they do not suggest who these individuals might be) points to the risk of extrapolating from observational analysis. Any discussion of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour within a particular place has to at least examine public debates and/or gather the viewpoints of its various users.

Four samples of the observational maps in Piazza Plebiscito are reproduced in the following pages.



General Observations: PIAZZA IS VERY NOISY — full of children ca. 150-200 people. Small groups of tourists (max 5 people) and couples crossing piazza to visit basilica

(A) Kids playing football (8 groups) 5-16 years A* football/rugby -kids running and bouncing with ball (ca. 15 kids)
A† Kids (ca. 10) playing in front of basilica at top of stairs

(B) Kids (x3) climbing lamp posts

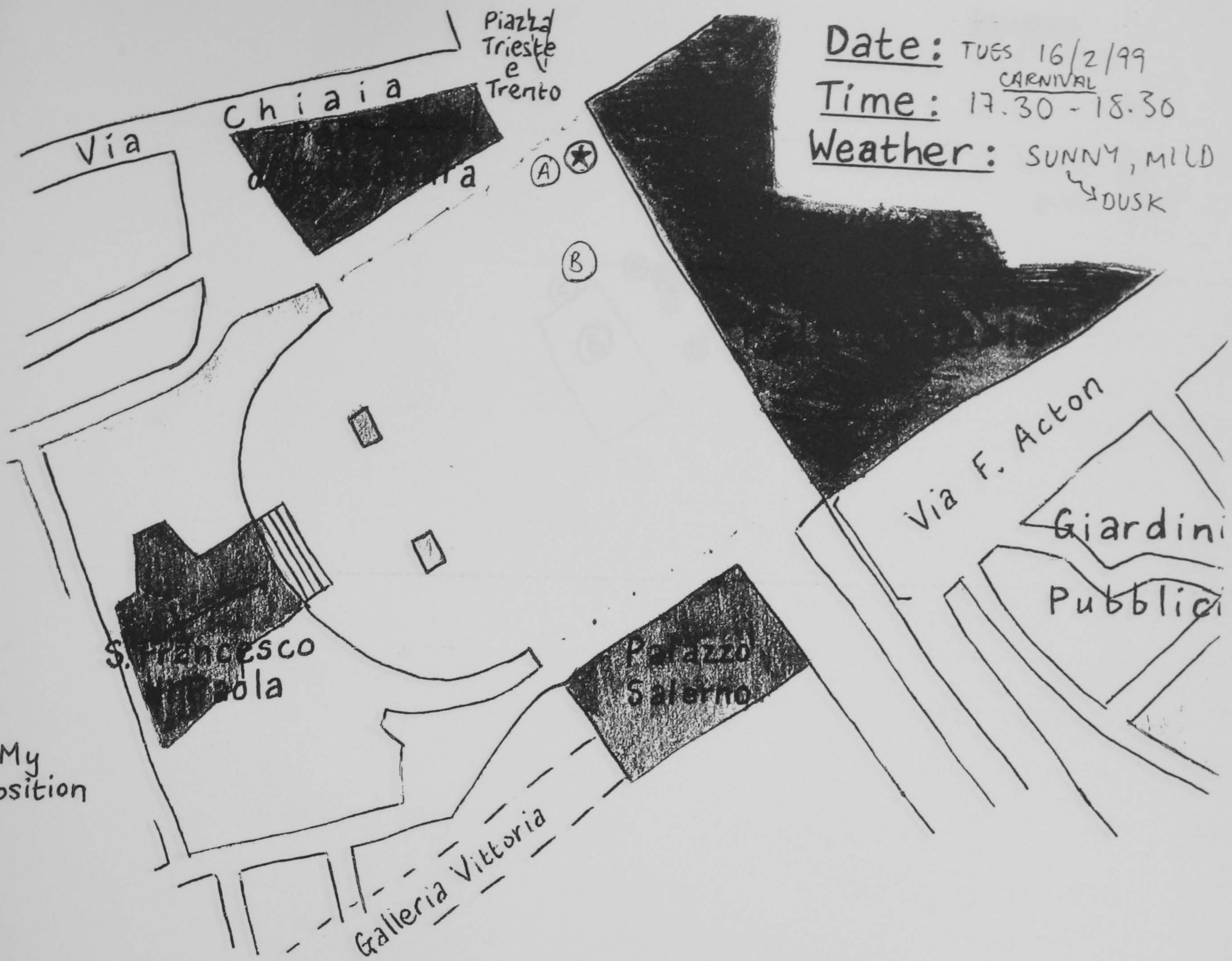
(C) Group photo of bride/groom + wedding guests (ie relatives + friends) on staircase leading up to Basilica

(D) young children (m/f 3-8 years; (dressed up) per bene) — part of wedding group(?) Playing on edge of steps (3 large blocks of marble) - one girl fallen over and crying

(E) Families/friends (mostly women 20-40 years) meeting up + chatting on steps

(F) Miniature motorcross bike driven across piazza in turns by two young children (m 7-10 years.)

Observational work in Piazza Plebiscito. Sample map No.1



General Observations: CROWDS OF CHILDREN - MANY IN COSTUME - SCATTERED ACROSS SQUARE - LITTER EVERYWHERE (from Scampia camp.)

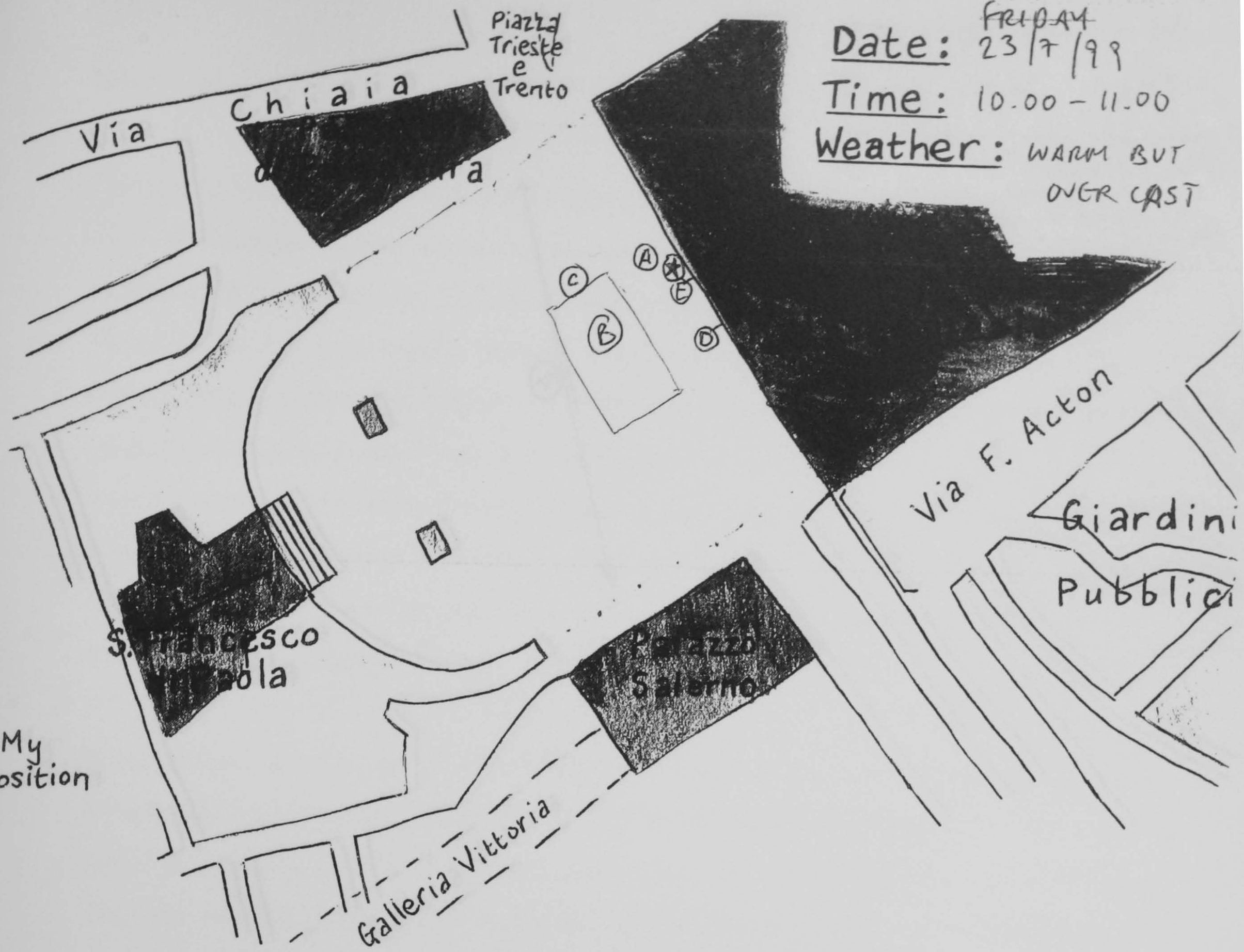
(A) Preparation of carnival procession by Rom children (5-10yrs x 20) organised by COMPARE + DAMM + the odd resident of Scampia.

- face painting, tin drums (old cans, barrels) costumes, dragon float (old coke cans used as wheels)
- accordian (Antonella, DAMM)

→ running, screaming, playing jokes on each other squirting foam. Mixing with other children (more courteous - eg 2 Rom girls asking for confetti from a toddler (f) and her mother)

(B) Balloon vendor

Observational work in Piazza Plebiscito. Sample map No.2



Date: FRIDAY 23/7/99

Time: 10.00 - 11.00

Weather: WARM BUT OVERCAST

General Observations: - BECAUSE OF COOLER TEMPERATURE THERE ARE MORE PEOPLE IN THE SQUARE WHICH AT THIS TIME IS USUALLY EMPTY ↳ MAJORITY OF WHICH ARE IN FRONT OF P.ZO REALE

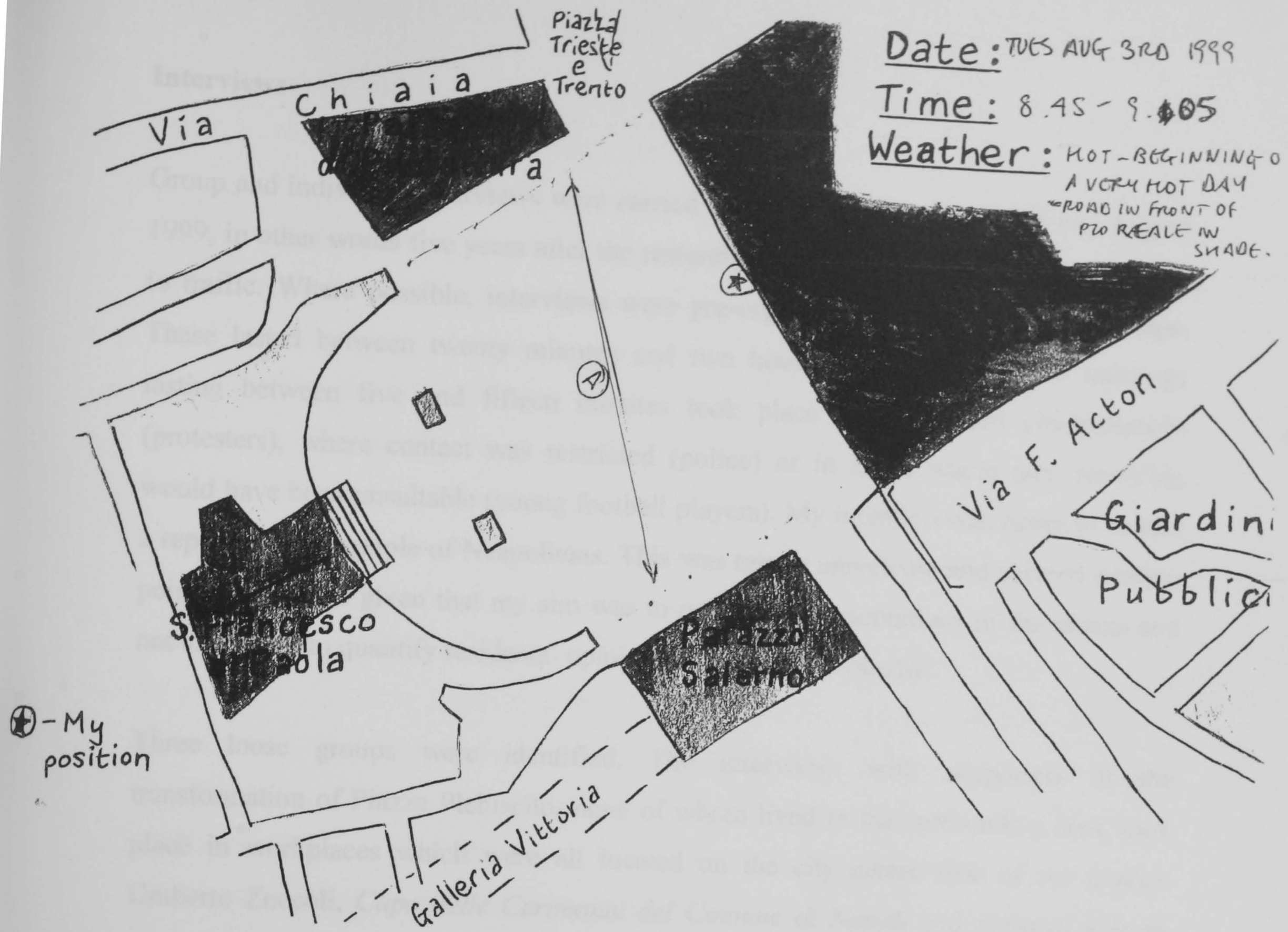
(A) - YOUNG WOMAN (ca 20 YEARS) WITH DOG ON LEAD (LABRADOR) CHATTING WITH YOUNG MAN (ca 20 YEARS) WITH DOG (BOXER? POINTED EARS). FOR ca. 15 MINUTES THEY TALK DOGS, SWAP DOGS, CHAT WITH DOGS - LEAVE BOTH SAYING "CIAO" - SEEM AS IF THEY HAVE JUST MET - WALK OFF IN OPPOSITE DIRECTION

(B) - WORKERS MOUNTING STAGE FOR CONCERT (NEXT WED 28/7/99 AT 9PM "COLORI DI NAPOLI"

(C) - GROUP OF TOURISTS - EAST EUROPEAN WITH GUIDE - GRADUALLY ROTATE TO TAKE IN VARIOUS SITES - P.ZO REALE, PREF, S. F DI P. THEN MOVE OFF TOWARDS BASILICA

(D) 10.00 - 10.30 - 2 MEN SELLING PRINTS TO PASSERS BY - THEN MOVE OFF TOWARDS P.ZA T. + T.

(E) TWO OLD WOMEN SIT DOWN NEXT TO ME (10.20) CHATTING IN NEAPOLITAN - PLACE PLASTIC BAGS ON LEDGE/BENCH SO AS NOT TO SIT ON DIRTY SURFACE. START BY SAYING THAT IN AFTERNOON NO ONE SITS HERE BECAUSE IT'S TOO HOT



General Observations: PIAZZA EMPTY OF USERS - APART FROM WOMAN WALKING DOG (Ⓐ)
QUITE BUSY IN FRONT P. REALE - PEOPLE WALKING TO WORK ETC.
- COUPLE OF SCOOTERS DART ACROSS USUAL PLACE + ONE IN FRONT OF P.ZO REALE. STAZIONE MOBILE OF CARABINIERI CROSSES FROM SANTA LUCIA AT 8.55 - BUT NOT THE ONE IN P.ZA T+T (AT 9.05 IT STILL HASN'T ARRIVED)
A COUPLE OF OLD ~~WOMAN~~/MIDDLE AGED WOMAN SITTING ON STONE BENCHES BY P.ZO REALE - IE FUNCTIONAL ELEMENT OF PIAZZA.

Observational work in Piazza Plebiscito. Sample map No.4

Interviews

Group and individual interviews were carried out between December 1998 and August 1999, in other words five years after the restoration of Piazza Plebiscito and its closure to traffic. Where possible, interviews were pre-organized and tape-recorded on tape. These lasted between twenty minutes and two hours. Shorter unrecorded meetings lasting between five and fifteen minutes took place in unforeseen circumstances (protesters), where contact was restricted (police) or in cases where tape recording would have been unsuitable (young football players). My intention was never to collect a representative sample of Neapolitans. This was totally unrealistic and seemed a rather pointless exercise given that my aim was to examine representations of the piazza and not to attempt to quantify residents' opinions about the new piazza[1].

Three loose groups were identified. The interviews with supporters of the transformation of Piazza Plebiscito, none of whom lived in the surrounding area, took place in workplaces which were all located on the city centre side of the piazza. Umberto Zoccoli, *Capo delle Cerimonie del Comune di Napoli* and personal aide to Antonio Bassolino, was interviewed in his office in the Town Hall; Architect Russo, responsible for the tutelage of Piazza Plebiscito, was interviewed in his office at the *Soprintendenza per i Beni Ambientali e Architettonici* in Palazzo Reale; Gaetano Santucci and Franca Pastore, council employeees of the *Osservatorio Turistico Culturale* were interviewed in the tourist office in Palazzo Reale; while Signora Zaccone, secretary to the prefect, Signora Mancini, co-responsible for the project under the colonnade and Stefano D'Antonio, responsible for the rents of the premises under the colonnade were questioned in the prefecture. The Santa Lucia resident Tulio Ciardulli, a distinguished up-market tailor and the former president of the shopkeeper association of Santa Lucia was interviewed in his shop in Via Santa Lucia. A vociferous opponent of the closure of the road in front of the Royal Palace and habitual letter-writer to the press, Ciardulli was included in this group as a representative of the public

[1] According to a 1997 survey of residents' views on a variety of aspects about the city which drew on a cross sample of 800 Neapolitans, 83% of respondents said they were in favour of the city's present pedestrian 'islands' and 74% approved the introduction of more car-free zones. A more detailed questionnaire concentrated on the closure of the city's promenade Via Caracciolo, but there was no reference to Piazza Plebiscito (Noto 1997: 42-46).

debate[2]. Like the others, his deliberation over the piazza's transformation was primarily discursive and did not reveal intimate knowledge of the daily life of the space.

A second distinct group of respondents were non-locals who had a daily personal relationship with the piazza through their work (and so are referred to collectively as 'non-local daily users'). Interviews were conducted with two operators of activities in premises under the colonnade (Alessandro Bernini, owner of the photographic studio and archive 'Parisio' and Ciro Esposito, the main employee of 'Officina Clemente', a former foundry converted into temporary exhibition space) and with the priest and the custodian of the Basilica of San Francesco di Paola. All were approached directly. Compared with the other groups, attitudes to the piazza's transformation were the most divergent. Bernini, who was regularly involved in the official cultural initiatives held in the piazza at Christmas and during the *Maggio dei Monumenti* programme (organizing among other things a photographic exhibition on Piazza Plebiscito in May 1998), was generally positive about the pedestrianization, despite referring to the dilapidated condition of the colonnade. In contrast, Esposito who was happy to see the removal of the car park, dwelt on the negative aspects of the piazza's transformation. It emerged that unlike the Studio Parisio, Officina Clemente was repeatedly ignored by the administration (at the end of December 1998 the council even mounted temporary exhibition stands in front of its entrance without seeking prior approval) and, moreover, its tenancy with the prefecture was unlikely to be renewed.

Contact with the daily users of Piazza Plebiscito was made directly in the piazza itself. Initial contacts would often lead to or facilitate other meetings. For instance, Salvatore, the *granita* seller by the colonnade, recommended me to the young mothers from the Pallonetto who assembled on the steps nearby ("tell them I sent you."); Maria, pensioner and member of the third order of San Francesco di Paola who was watching a wedding procession from the Basilica's steps, introduced me to her nephew, Pietro who had entered the piazza during our interview. All of the key informants lived in the Spanish Quarters or the Pallonetto, hence I refer to them as 'local daily users'. No

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[2] Back in the summer of 1994 following the G7, Ciardulli had publicly dubbed Piazza Plebiscito the Berlin Wall and Santa Lucia the Gaza Strip (*il Tempo* 19/7/94). In one publicity stunt he was photographed in Piazza Plebiscito with a camel (which he had borrowed from the local circus) so as to insinuate that the piazza had become a desert. However, if the road had been left open, it is unlikely that Ciardulli would have been part of the public debate because he had little interest in the piazza (other than the fact that, as a self-confessed *neo-borbonico*, he insisted on calling it Largo di Palazzo).

reference was made to public figures (apart from Bassolino) and there were no connections with the first group of respondents. Interviews were also generally shorter. While some assumed the role of local guides (Salvatore), others were less assertive and attached little significance to the link between their use and the piazza`s status.

Gathering accounts on the piazza was not an entirely straightforward task. I presented myself to prospective informants as someone who was writing a book about people`s uses of Piazza Plebiscito or simply as a university researcher interested in the new piazza. The fact that I was unmistakably foreign helped. It meant that most informants did not react negatively to my inquisitive interest in their link with the piazza (the main exceptions were the military and the owner of Gambrinus which are discussed below). The main methodological problem was that Piazza Plebiscito could not be considered a "social setting" in the same way as the city, neighbourhood or alleyway (Hannerz 1980). I could not presume that there existed a meaningful relationship with the piazza. This was particularly the case with local users. I quickly discovered that "tell me about your relationship with the piazza" would provoke flummoxed looks; while "tell me about the piazza" would inevitably lead to a general account of the transformation along the lines: "it used to be a car park, then with the G7 they closed it to traffic." Hence I tried to structure interviews with open-ended questions: what do you do in the piazza? what memories do you have abut the piazza? what do you think about the new piazza? In order to gather views on specific issues such as the public art and organized events I had to directly ask their opinions. The presence of Robert Rauschenberg's 'Banners' (a series of forty large canvases hanging between the columns of the colonnade) was a useful prompt. Respondents expressed indifferent or negative opinions about these banners but would perhaps then refer more favourably to other works. Massimo, for instance, compared them to *La Montagna del Sale*: "The Salt Statue was nice because children could play on top of it. It was a clever idea because in Naples there's no snow. That's what it was supposed to represent: snow."

Some interviews were less successful than others. It was often the case that unless the informant had a public, personal or professional link with the piazza, he or she would tend to mirror media representations; in other words: "the piazza used to be a chaotic car park, then it was cleared and restored with the G7, now it is beautiful, a symbol of Naples, a tourist attraction etc.". Some of the 'failed' contacts, in retrospect, reflected

people's relationships with the piazza. For instance three attempts to talk to military officials in Palazzo Salerno about the impact of the pedestrianization were met each time with the same dismissals: "the military cannot talk to you" and "they are here for temporary periods and so are not in a position to help you". The link with the piazza was detached and impersonal because the stationing of staff in Palazzo Salerno was coincidental. On the last attempt I was advised to speak with veterans who met in another part of the building, but these ushered me away with a few essential pieces of tourist information: "all you need to know is that is the Royal Palace and that is the church of San Francesco di Paola.." A similar response was provided by the owner of Gambrinus who did not recognize a significant link between the bar's present business and the transformed piazza. According to the owner, the bar's relationship with its clients was based on its own tradition and was not mediated through changes to Piazza Plebiscito. At most, there might have been an increase in tourists.

List of Interviews (in chronological order)

The location where the interview took place is in square brackets. Unless stated, names have been changed.

Tape-recorded:

Alessandro Bernini, photographer and owner of Studio Parisio, [Studio Parisio, colonnade of San Francesco di Paola], 2/12/98; 1 hour 40 minutes (second half not recorded).

Ciro Esposito, employee in Officina Clemente, ex-foundry/exhibition space, [Officina Clemente, colonnade of San Francesco di Paola], 8/1/99; 2 hours.

Francesco Ceci (original name), sociologist and council officer in city planning information centre '*Casa della Città*', [Casa della Città, Barra, Naples], 10/3/99; 40 minutes.

Paolo Macry (original name), historian, [Department of History, Federico II University of Naples], 19/5/99 and 26/5/99; 1 hour 30 minutes.

Massimo, ex-resident of il Pallonetto, presently living in Quarto, [steps in front of entrance to basilica], 31/5/99; 20 minutes.

Daniela Lepore (original name), urbanist, [Department of Architecture, Federico II University of Naples], 8/6/99; 1 hour 30 minutes.

Salvatore, *granita* seller in Piazza Plebiscito, [end of colonnade by Piazza Carolina], 11/6/99; 30 minutes.

Maria, resident of Monte di Dio and member of third order of San Francesco di Paola, [steps in front of entrance to basilica], 11/6/99; 40 minutes.

Mothers from the Pallonetto, [steps of the colonnade], 11/6/99: 20 minutes.

Custodian of San Francesco di Paola, [inside church], 23/6/99; 30 minutes.

Franca Pastore and Gaetano Santucci, officers in the *Osservatorio Turistico Culturale*, [Osservatorio Turistico Culturale, Palazzo Reale]. 24/6/99; 50 minutes.

Architetto Russo (original name), architect in the *Soprintendenza per i Beni Ambientali e Architettonici* responsible for Piazza Plebiscito, [*Soprintendenza per i Beni Ambientali e Architettonici*, Palazzo Reale], 7/7/99; 40 minutes.

Antonio Sergio (original name), co-owner of Gambrinus, [table in front of Gambrinus], 7/7/99; 15 minutes.

Tulio Ciardulli (original name), tailor and ex-president of Santa Lucia shopkeeper association, [tailor shop in Via Santa Lucia], 16/7/99; 45 minutes.

Signora Zaccone, prefect's secretary, [Prefecture], 17/7/99; 25 minutes.

Sabina, resident of the Pallonetto, [steps of colonnade], 25/7/99; 1 hour 30 minutes.

Umberto Zoccoli (original name), *Segretario delle Cerimonie* (equivalent of press secretary) for Bassolino [Palazzo San Giacomo, Piazza Municipio], 27/7/99; 40 minutes.

Unrecorded:

Taxi driver, (in front of Bar Gambrinus), 20/12/98; 5 minutes.

Vito and Michele, regular football players in Piazza Plebiscito, [under colonnade in front of entrance to basilica], 31/5/99; 20 minutes (included participation in match).

Fabrizio and Giovanni, 20-year-old residents of Quarto who regularly meet in Piazza Plebiscito after shopping outings to Via Roma, [steps in front of entrance to basilica], 31/5/99; 10 minutes.

Antonio Sarracino (original name), professional wedding photographer [studio in Montesanto], 1/6/99; 20 minutes.

Group of sixteen secondary school children from the Pallonetto and Spanish Quarters, playing football in front of basilica, [under colonnade in front of entrance to basilica], 11/6/99; 10 minutes.

Pietro, Maria's nephew and resident of the Pallonetto, [on steps in front of basilica]. 11/6/99; 15 minutes.

Antonio and friend, organized unemployed demonstrators, [in front of prefecture]. 15/6/99; 10 minutes.

Padre Cozza, priest of San Francesco di Paola, [inside basilica]. 16/7/99; 25 minutes.

Prefecture police, [reception of prefecture], 20/7/99; 10 minutes.

Antonia, performer with *Living Theatre* troupe, [in front of Palazzo Reale following performance], 22/7/99; 10 minutes

Two Carabinieri, [mobile unit, Piazza Trieste e Trento], 23/7/99; 15 minutes.

Ex-lorry driver and hawker of tourist prints in Piazza Plebiscito, [in front of Palazzo Reale], 23/7/99; 5 minutes.

Barman in Piazza Carolina, [bar in Piazza Carolina], 26/7/99; 5 minutes.

Signora Mancini and Stefano D'Antonio, prefecture officials, the first is the representative for the project coordinated together with the superintendency and council for the reanimation of the colonnade and the second is responsible for the rented space under colonnade, [prefecture], 4/8/99; 15 minutes.

2. Piazza Garibaldi

The aim of the fieldwork was not to 'explain' Piazza Garibaldi through a scientific dissection of its social and economic context. Rather the intention was to examine forms of self-representation and immigrants' perceptions of the area. For practical reasons I concentrated on the day time. While it cannot be denied that immigrants are directly involved with prostitution and drug dealing, on a number of night visits the piazza itself was near empty. The research was based on two periods of fieldwork. The first period, which lasted from February to May 1999, looked at the general question of immigration in Naples. Observational analysis was carried out in a series of immigrant spaces including Piazza Garibaldi and interviews were conducted with immigrants of different nationalities (Polish, Macedonian Rom, Ivorian, Sri Lankan, Jordanian) in various parts of the city (Vomero, Ponticelli, *centro antico*). The second period of fieldwork from January to June 2000 concentrated entirely on Piazza Garibaldi. A systematic mapping of the activities from a single vantage point similar to the study of Piazza Plebiscito was not possible because of the space's dimensions and the huge quantity of traffic, although observation sessions were carried out from various places during frequent visits over the six months (by the statue of Garibaldi and in front of the station). These findings are summarized in chapter 9. Rather, the research was based predominantly on the contacts made in the piazza during guided visits with immigrant informants lasting between one and six hours. During his own periods of observation around Piazza Garbaldi, Fabio Amato complained of a wall of mistrust which prevented and dissuaded him from approaching subjects:

> "An unwritten code immediately turns the passer-by into a foreigner, the inquisitive looks of the Africans and the suspicion of the shop assistants remind us that we have crossed the boundaries of a space intended for a specific public." (Amato 1997: 22)

In my case, I was able to develop over a year a series of contacts through different channels: a 'cultural operator' course for immigrants run by a publicly-funded cooperative, a legal advice centre, immigrant associations, the CGIL immigrant bureau, *centri sociali* and other organizations working with immigrants. Through my partner, an expert on immigration law who taught on the cultural operator course, I established an ongoing rapport (and friendship) with participants who were from various countries: Senegal, Gambia, Albania, Yugoslavia, Algeria, Poland, Somalia, Sri Lanka and the

Ivory Coast. My collaboration with the legal advice centre enabled me to make contacts with irregular and regular immigrants that otherwise would not have been possible. Because the legal help was free of charge, clients were willing to accompany me on visits to the piazza. These primary informants allowed me to approach and speak with individuals who, if I were alone, would not have responded. For instance, an interview with four Polish workers in a bar was made possible by the reassurances of my Polish guide that I was not somebody to do with the police. Of course, this did not prevent a number of refusals and reticent responses. Significantly, some immigrants insisted that I was a journalist and therefore were not interested in speaking with me. One Senegalese street trader belligerently told me that if I wanted to understand anything about the piazza I should look at the criminal element among Neapolitans.

The final analysis is based on ten primary informants (either guides or interviewees) and about thirty secondary respondents met in the piazza. These were of various nationalities: Pakistani, Guinean, Senegalese, Polish, Ukrainian and Italian. No direct contact was made with the Chinese 'community' (although I was taken around their shops in the area by a local resident and researcher from the Istituto Universitario Orientale). nor with Magrebis, apart from an Algerian client of the legal centre who recounted the nights he was forced to spend in empty railway carriages in the central station after his landlord had not allowed him to put up a friend at home. Language was often a barrier to in-depth discussions. This was overcome by avoiding formal interview situations and opting for open-ended conversations with subjects. A tape recorder was not used during the visits. Responses were instead recorded in detailed fieldnotes.

List of Interviews (in chronological order)

As with Piazza Plebiscito, the location where the interview took place is in square brackets. Unless stated, names have been changed.

Tape-recorded:

Mohammed (Jordanian male), owner of café [café in *centro antico*], 28/2/99; 50 minutes

Ivana and **Tanya** (Polish females), domestic workers [private house in Rione Alto], 12/3/99; 1 hour 15 minutes

Mika and **Sead** (Macedonian Roma males), unemployed [post-earthquake prefabricated huts in Ponticelli], 13/3/99; 2 hours

Abdoul (Senegalese male) and **Sergio** (Italian male), managers of wholesale store which sells goods primarily to Italian and immigrant street traders [shop in Via Torino], 21/3/00; 1 hour.

Jamal Qaddorah (original name), head of immigrant service at CGIL (along streets between Vasto and Centro Direzionale and in office in CGIL headquarters, Via Torino), 23/3/00; 40 minutes.

Carmine Barbuto (original name), vice president of Mercato-Pendino district [office in the *circoscrizione* (district council hall), Corso Garibaldi], 5/5/00; 1 hour.

Riccardo Gallo, employee of FS for 25 years based at Stazione Centrale [private house in Montesanto], 15/5/00; 1 hour.

Raffaele Tecce (original name), Assessore alla Normalità [Palazzo San Giacamo, Piazza Municipio], 2/6/00; 30 minutes.

Unrecorded:

Madji (Pakistani male), awaiting regularization, client of *Sportello Legale Immigrati*. Piazza Gesù Nuovo, works intermittently as a street trader and sells international phone lines on his mobile phone [walkabout in Piazza Garibaldi], 5/3/00; 5 hours.

During the walkabout conversations were had with four Pakistani and three Senegalese street traders; a Pakistani friend attempting to open a grocery shop in the Duchesca market area; two Italian members of the '*3 Febbraio*' anti-racist organization; two Polish and two Senegalese 'clients' of Madji's international phone service

Petra (Polish female), regular, works part-time in the domestic sector and follows a training course for immigrants run by a social cooperative at the Centro Direzionale. Three separate meetings took place:

i.) walkabout in Piazza Garibaldi and meal at Petra's house (south of piazza), 12/3/00; 6 hours.

ii.) meeting in pizzeria in Corso Lucci with Petra's Polish female and Italian male friends, 19/3/00; 1 hour.

iii.) walkabout in Piazza Garibaldi and visit to Polish friend's house near Piazza Nolana, 15/5/00; 2 hours 30 minutes.

The walkabouts included conversations with three Ukrainian domestic workers and two Italian male friends under *proboscide* area; the Italian owner of a cantina on the south side of Piazza Garibaldi; eight Polish domestic workers and two Italian male friends in bars and restaurants on south side of Piazza Garibaldi and along Corso Lucci]

Ousmanne (Guinean male), awaiting regularization, client of *Sportello Legale Immigrati*, Piazza Gesù Nuovo, works as a porter in Vasto during the week and as a street trader at weekends along the sea front in Chiaia [walkabout in Piazza Garibaldi and Vasto], 17/3/00; 1 hour.

The walkabout included a meeting with a Senegalese owner of a wholesale store in Via Torino

Diop (Senegalese male), regular, president of '*Ben Khadi*' Association, works as a DJ and runs a bar in the *centro storico* [walkabout in Piazza Garibaldi and Vasto], 17/3/00; 2 hours.

The walkabout included conversations with four Senegalese street traders and shop assitants in Via Bologna and one Senegalese shop assistant and one Senegalese street trader in Via Torino

Giovanni Persico (original name), professor of urban sociology and former resident in Piazza Garibaldi area [Department of Sociology, University of Naples], 7/4/00: 50 minutes.

Fabio Amato (original name), researcher in Geography department and resident in Corso Lucci [Istituto Universitario Orientale, Via Chiatamone], 14/4/00; 1 hour 30 minutes.

Fabio Meroni (original name), resident in Via Milano and graduating student in Geography at the IOU researching Chinese presence around Piazza Garibaldi [walkabout in Piazza Garibaldi, Vasto and Duchesca], 26/5/00; 2 hours.

Pape Seck (original name), President of Senegalese Association [*Sportello Legale Immigrati*, Piazza Gesù Nuovo], 27/5/00; 1 hour.

3. DAMM

List of Interviews (all tape-recorded)

Note: here original names are used unless stated

Mario Pochet: former leader of PCI on the Avvocata-Montecalvario-San Giuseppe-Porto district council and coordinator of campaign against the original Ventaglieri project [interviewed during walkabout in Montesanto and along Via Roma], 11/8/99; 1 hour

<u>DAMM</u>

Luca: joined DAMM six months after its occupation in summer of 1995 and became one of its present principal protagonists; co-ran the *ludoteca* and *doposcuola* for primary school children and one of the organizers of political activities, particularly on the Roma question in Naples [first interview took place in the Parco Ventaglieri, the second was conducted inside the *palazzina*], 11/7/99 & 19/7/99; 2 hours in total.

Maurizio: one of the original occupants and principal protagonists of DAMM; primarily involved with writing and organizing theatrical shows [interviewed at home in Montesanto], 1/8/99; 1 hour 30 minutes.

'**Sant'Agostino**' (name changed): one of the teenage regulars of the park, participated in DAMM activities and the Berlin-Napoli exchange [interviewed in *palazzina*], 30/11/98; 40 minutes

'**Barilla**' (name changed): one of the teenage regulars of the park, participated in DAMM activities and the Berlin-Napoli exchange [interviewed in Piazza Plebiscito], 15/12/98; 20 minutes

Other *centri sociali* in Naples:

Officina 99

Samos and **Carla**: Ex-members of the Collettivo Comunista Napoletana and original occupants of Officina 99 in 1991; they were no longer directly involved with its management at the time of interview [interviewed at home in Spanish Quarters]. 11/8/99; 1 hour.

Lo Ska

Sirio: one of the original occupants of lo Ska in February 1995; particularly involved in immigrant politics in Naples [interviewed in Royal Palace gardens], 17/7/99; 1 hour 30 minutes.

Raffaele: one of the original occupants of lo Ska in February 1995 ; was one of a group of professionally trained doctors involved in the medical drop-in centre for immigrants [interviewed at lo Ska, Piazza Gesù], 28/7/99; 45 minutes.

4. Newspapers Consulted

Newspapers were consulted in the the city's two newspaper libraries: the Emeroteca Tucci (Palazzo delle Poste, Piazza Matteotti) and the Emeroteca Matilde Serao (Palazzo Reale, Piazza Plebiscito); and at the archives of the *Soprintendenza per i Beni Ambientali e Architettonici* (Palazzo Reale, Piazza Plebiscito), for material on Piazza Plebiscito, and the social research unit *'Alice'* (Centro Direzionale), for material on immigration. In addition, an important source was the two volume tome *Storia Fotografica di Napoli 1945/1985* (Wanderlingh and Corsi 1987) which provided a week-by-week summary of events and news stories in Naples from 1945 to 1985. This served as a useful starting point for the more detailed media analysis (for instance it gave me the exact date when the car park in Piazza Plebsicito was opened). The following newspapers and months were examined:

Il Mattino

January, February, November, December 1963

June-August 1965

June-August 1967

April-June 1973

November 1980-December 1981

May, June 1982

May 1987

October 1989-June 1990

November 1990

January 1993

May 1993-May 2001

(Editions from January 1999 to the present were consulted on the newspaper's web page ilmattino.it)

La Repubblica (Neapolitan edition)

October 1989-May 1990

May 1993-May 2001

La Repubblica (national edition)

January 1985-December 2000 (these were consulted on CD-Rom using word searches)

Corriere del Mezzogiorno (Neapolitan insert of *Corriere della Sera*)

June, July 1997

October 1998-May 2001

(This paper was often consulted on the web page corrieredelmezzogiorno.it, although unlike *il Mattino* it did not have an archive)

Corriere della Sera

October 1998-May 2001

Roma

March-June 1956

January, February 1963

Il Corriere di Napoli (local insert of *Roma*)

February-September 1994

January, August, November, December 1999

May, June 2000

Il Mezzogiorno

April-July 1994

Il Tempo

February-September 1994

Il Manifesto

November 1989-May 1990

May-July 1994

October 1998-May 2001

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